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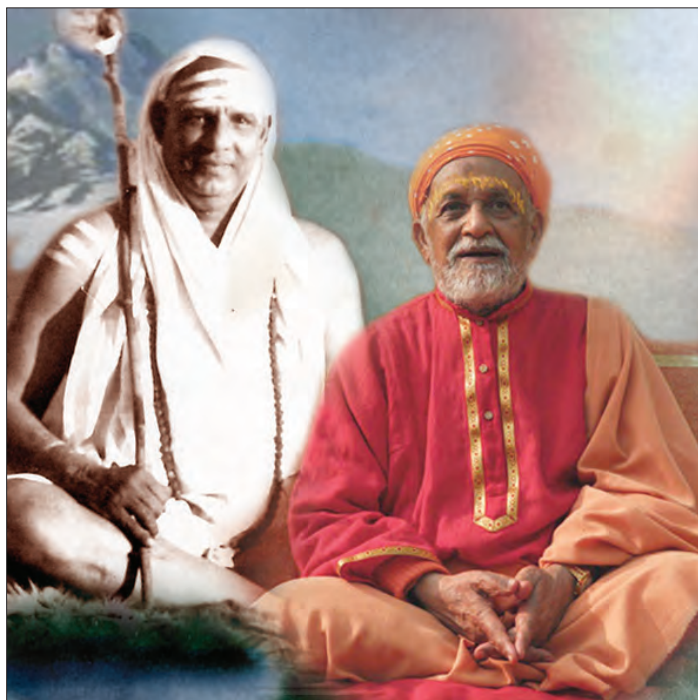
CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Hatha Yoga Book 2

HATHA YOGA AND THE MIND

*From the teachings of
two great luminaries of the 20th century,*

Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati
Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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*From the teachings of
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*Including answers from the satsangs of
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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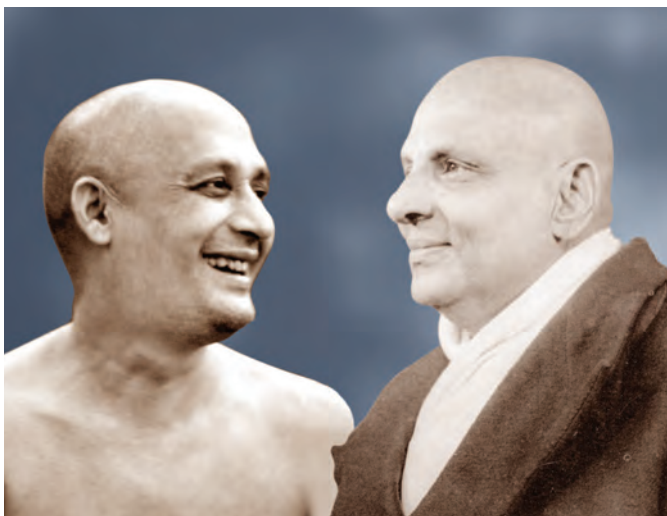
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga
and to our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our spiritual journey.*

Swami Niranjan

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Preface

CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Conversations on the Science of Yoga is an encyclopaedic series which brings together the collected teachings of two generations of masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Munger. Satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati on his numerous national and international tours also provide the answers to many questions on this vast subject. These luminaries represent a living tradition in which the eternal knowledge and wisdom of yoga has been passed from guru to disciple in a dynamic continuum from the early twentieth century to the first decades of the twenty-first century.

The series consists of sets of books which present the vast, timeless culture of yoga topic by topic, in question and answer format. In this way, complex and profound subjects such as karma yoga, hatha yoga and bhakti yoga, are presented in clear, simple language. These conversations on yoga reflect an ancient and enduring approach to the transmission of wisdom, in which spiritual aspirants seek answers to their questions at the feet of the guru.

Many of the answers also include verses from the various relevant scriptures, connecting the modern experience with the classical tradition. It is through the lives and teachings of the masters that the scriptures are correctly and intuitively

interpreted for each generation, ensuring that the light of these revelations continues to illumine and inspire the hearts and minds of all who aspire for spiritual upliftment.

Conversations on the Science of Yoga has been compiled from the rich archive of satsangs and writings, both published and unpublished, which is held at the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. The organization of this material into the major branches of yoga and related topics creates a unique interpretation of the classical yogic sciences for the benefit of humanity in the modern era. Deeply founded in tradition, the teachings are both systematic and practical, addressing the needs of individuals and society at a time when adjustment to constant change is placing unprecedented pressure on people all over the world.

The Bihar Yoga tradition

Bihar School of Yoga is ideally placed to produce this major contribution to yogic literature. Founded in 1963 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the system known in India as Bihar Yoga and internationally as Satyananda Yoga, seamlessly integrates all facets of the yogic tradition, including the various branches of yoga, the philosophies which are fundamental to the yogic culture and the dynamism of self-

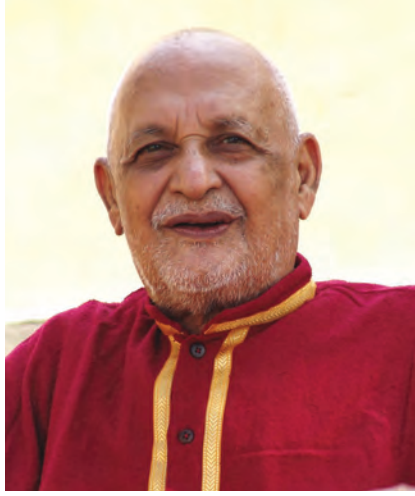


realized preceptors which ensures that the teachings remain fresh and relevant in any age. This all-inclusive approach means that yogic practices are available as tools for holistic life management, while other *vidyas*, spiritual sciences, such as Tantra, Vedanta and Samkhya provide a broad philosophical base. Emerging from this living tradition, *Conversations on the Science of Yoga* is a unique and precious offering to humanity.



Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887–1963)

Swami Sivananda was a towering spiritual force in the yogic renaissance which developed in India in the first half of the twentieth century. After serving as a doctor in Malaya, he returned to India to pursue his spiritual aspirations, and in 1924 was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa in Rishikesh. He founded the Divine Life Society, toured India extensively, wrote hundreds of books and inspired thousands around the world to practise yoga and lead a divine life. Swami Sivananda's eightfold path of yoga – serve, love, give, purify, do good, be good, meditate, realize – expresses his philosophy of service to humanity and continues to guide the work of the Bihar School of Yoga.



Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1923–2009)

Swami Satyananda was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa by his guru Swami Sivananda, in 1947. After serving his guru's mission in Rishikesh for twelve years, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. From that base he took the teachings to the rest of the world, fulfilling the mandate of his guru to 'spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore.'

Through his genius and compassion, many ancient, complex and esoteric practices were systematized, simplified and made available to people of all ages, cultures and creeds. Swami Satyananda's blend of charisma and pragmatism attracted multitudes of devotees wherever he went, giving rise to a global movement and creating a far-reaching network of ashrams, yoga centres and teachers. Meanwhile, the headquarters in Bihar continued to expand its many programs, including the publishing division, producing numerous books that both preserve and disseminate the incredibly rich seam of practical wisdom which flows through this lineage.

In 1988 Swami Satyananda renounced his mission in order to live as a paramahansa sannyasin, performing higher

spiritual and vedic sadhanas in an isolated location. During this chapter of his life, he also realized his guru's teaching of 'serve, love, give', by establishing Sivananda Math, an organization dedicated to raising the living standards of the weaker and underprivileged sectors of society.

At midnight on 5 December 2009, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati attained mahasamadhi.



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati (1960)

A yogi from earliest childhood, Swami Niranjanananda joined the Bihar School of Yoga in 1964 and was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa in 1971. At the age of eleven he was sent to live abroad by his guru Swami Satyananda, giving him direct experience and understanding of people from a vast array of cultures and walks of life. These years instilled in him a rare, cross-cultural insight into human nature, enabling him to communicate and interact with the international community with familiarity, ease and humour.

Combined with his depth of spiritual and yogic knowledge, this background equipped Swami Niranjanananda to guide the Bihar School of Yoga and the international yoga movement from 1983 until 2008, when he began handing

over the administration to the next generation. During this time he also authored many classic books on yoga, tantra and the upanishads and founded Bihar Yoga Bharati, the world's first yoga university, while continuing extensive national and international touring.

Following retirement from his role at the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda established Sannyasa Peeth for the development and training of sannyasins, and for his own pursuit of the higher sadhanas of sannyasa.

As the spiritual successor to Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjanananda continues to inspire aspirants around the world.



Yoga is not a philosophy, it is a practical science. Philosophy gives you knowledge, yoga gives you experience. This is the beauty of yoga. That experience is a manifestation of your inner being.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Introduction

All sadhanas are aimed at obtaining mastery over the mind.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

The uptake of hatha yoga is on the rise, with the therapeutic benefits of yoga being increasingly acknowledged by mainstream medical models. This is particularly so in relation to the relaxation and stress-relieving effects of yoga, showing recognition of the mind-body connection and the benefits of hatha yoga on the general aspects of mental health that affect one's experience of daily life. There remains, however, a major gap in the popular understanding of hatha yoga's fundamental and profound interaction with the mind, and therefore, of its full potential as a tool for management of the mind and emotions.

This divergence begins with the perception that hatha yoga is 'physical yoga', an erroneous idea that has been encouraged by the myriad 'yoga' brands which have become a feature of the global fitness industry. Ironically, hatha yoga's traditional purpose as a pathway to a harmonized, one-pointed mind – a mind that can smoothly attain higher states of consciousness, the pinnacle of which is samadhi – has been largely forgotten. Perhaps the misconception has arisen as hatha yoga approaches the problem of mind management from an unexpected angle. While modern psychology

tends towards mind-based solutions to mental disturbances, hatha yoga declares that there is an easier route: purify and harmonize the physical and pranic bodies, and the mind will inevitably follow.

The mind as energy

The elegance of this solution is explored in *Hatha Yoga and the Mind*. The starting point for this exploration is gaining an understanding of the nature of the mind according to hatha yoga. The concept of the mind as energy is fundamental to the theory of hatha yoga, and from that basis its influence on the many facets of mind and consciousness is approached. In the words of Swami Satyananda, “Mind is energy. It is not emotion – it is not anger, passion or greed. These energies – which are called mind and prana, and which the shastras call ida and pingala – are the main subject of hatha yoga.”

The purpose of hatha yoga is to bring about the union of *chitta shakti*, the mental energy, which flows through ida nadi, with *prana shakti*, the dynamic energy, which flows through pingala nadi. This union results in a state of complete inner harmony and equilibrium, and is achieved by consistent sadhana of hatha yoga practices including shatkarmas, asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas. Ida and pingala, the twin forces, flow at varying strengths in every individual, depending on one’s inherent nature and interaction with life. When these flows are out of balance, their energies are experienced as duality.

How is this duality experienced and expressed? As highs and lows, ups and downs, confusion, stress, conflict, emptiness, depression, anxiety, fear, ambition, excitement, selfishness, insecurity – the list goes on. They are disturbances that everyone faces at some time, and for which psychological counselling is often sought. In spite of the burgeoning mental health industry, however, the problems are not going away. To the contrary, mental health is in a state of crisis, with conditions such as depression and anxiety on the

increase, and stress-related complaints regarded as inevitable in modern lifestyles. It is not unusual for people living outwardly comfortable lives to be on the edge of despair internally, experiencing panic attacks, insomnia, tension headaches, phobias and many other symptoms of inner turmoil.

The body is the medium

According to the tradition, hatha yoga is chiefly concerned with the mind and prana – hence its direct effect on the mental quality of practitioners. This is contrary to common thinking which associates hatha yoga almost entirely with the body. What then is the role of the body? The body is the medium. This body, which is the vehicle for the spirit's journey through life, is the field through which hatha yoga accesses the prana, and through prana, the mind. According to Swami Niranjanananda, "When physical postures are practised, one is not only working with the body, but also with the mind, the emotions and the spirit. The balance, wellbeing, health and vitality experienced in the body through performing physical postures affects the mental dimension. In this way, even the most basic of the physical practices can help one to achieve internal balance and harmony. This process is further intensified when physical postures are combined with concentration, relaxation and meditation techniques. In this process, unity, harmony and integration of body, mind and spirit are experienced. Yoga comes full circle, which means union."

The practices of hatha yoga, by working from the gross to the subtle, follow an intelligent and logical system for the evolution of individual consciousness towards transcendence of its limited nature. *Hatha Yoga and the Mind* describes the various aspects of this process, including the direct affects of the practices on the brain, its implications for mind and personality management, the role of hatha yoga in relation to meditation, and taken to its conclusion, the attainment of sublime states.

Importance of the lineage

The beauty and wisdom of the authentic hatha yoga tradition is presented here by three modern masters. Their understanding of human nature and the needs of the individual and society in modern times shines out of their words, complemented by inspired reference to original hatha yoga texts. The importance of the guru in the culture of yoga has always been paramount. The classical texts state this repeatedly, and it is lack of respect for that instruction that has led masses of practitioners around the world in the wrong direction. The passing on of the knowledge is the task of the gurus and has been entrusted to them from earliest times.

The texts also make it clear that the knowledge is ‘secret’ and should only be revealed at the discretion of the guru. This implies that the practices have a power which cannot be understood by one and all, and that the techniques need to be used in the correct way for safety and effectiveness. The guidance of the guru is not given as an option, it is part of the sadhana and therefore part of the process of hatha yoga. Without the humility, surrender and grace that the relationship with guru involves, the yoga is incomplete.

The lack of such gurus in the mass propagation of hatha yoga during modern times means that an incomplete system is often being developed and delivered by inadequately trained teachers. While knowledge of the physical aspect of asanas may be extensive, shatkarma, pranayama, mudra and bandha tend to be neglected, as well as the subtler aspects of asana practice. Also, the place of hatha yoga within the overall scheme of yoga as a science for spiritual evolverment is not understood, meaning that the partially-known system is taught in isolation, further limiting its effectiveness.

Satyananda Yoga offers hatha yoga for the needs of modern society without compromising the breadth and depth of the ancient tradition. Three generations of gurus from this lineage, Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, have guided the spread and development of the treasure that is authentic hatha yoga,

providing continuity, structure and inspiration through both their institutions and their grace, since the early twentieth century. *Hatha Yoga and the Mind* is a compilation of their combined understandings, knowledge and experience on what has become the missing link in hatha yoga – its systematic, profound and unique method for resolving the mental and emotional turbulence that has troubled humanity throughout the ages.



1

The Mind as Energy

THE NATURE OF MIND

Does the energy of the mind expand beyond the body?

Swami Sivananda: The mind has an aura – a mental aura or psychic aura. Aura is *tejas*, a brilliance or halo that emanates from the mind. The aura of those who have developed their minds is extremely effulgent. It can travel long distances and have a beneficial effect on a large number of persons who come under its influence.

What is the relationship between prana and the mind?

Swami Sivananda: *Prana*, energy, is the outer overcoat for the mind. By exercising control over breathing, the subtle prana within can be controlled. Control of prana means control of the mind. The mind cannot operate without the help of prana. The vibrations of prana produce thoughts in the mind. It is prana that moves the mind. It is prana that sets the mind in motion. It is the *sukshma prana*, psychic prana, which is intimately connected with the mind. Wherever there is prana, there is mind: even in the external movement of breath beyond the nose, the mind is mixed with the external breath.

The breath represents the flywheel of an engine. Just as the other wheels stop when the flywheel stops, so other organs cease working when the yogi stops the breath. If one can

control the flywheel, one can easily control the other wheels. Likewise, if one can control the external breath, one can easily control the inner vital force, prana. The process which controls the prana by regulation of the breath, is pranayama.

Which is superior, prana or the mind?

Swami Sivananda: Some practioners of hatha yoga consider that prana tattwa is superior to *manas tattwa*, the mind-principle. They say prana is present even when the mind is absent during sleep. Hence prana plays a more vital part than the mind.

If one goes through the parables in *Kaushitaki* and *Chhandogya Upanishads*, when all the senses, mind and prana fight amongst themselves as to their superiority, prana is regarded as the highest of all. Prana is the oldest, for it starts its functioning from the very moment the child is conceived, whereas the sensory organs begin to function only when their special abodes, such as the ears are formed. Prana is called *jyeshtha*, oldest, and *sreshtha*, best in the Upanishads.

It is through the vibrations of psychic prana that the life of the mind, sankalpa or thinking is kept up and thought is produced. One sees, hears, talks, senses, thinks, feels, wills, and knows through the help of prana: therefore, the Shrutis declare, “Prana is Brahman.”

Is the mind regarded as an energy system in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In the human being, energy operates in two main areas. One area of energy is the mind. Therefore, a thought is not a psychological occurrence. An experience is not a psychological point. An emotion is not a psychological event. Thought, emotion, memory, feeling, love, hatred, compassion and passion – all these psychological behaviours are points of energy.

The other area of energy is *prana* – the life, mobility, and existence of the physical body. These are the two active areas of energy which the science of yoga recognizes as controlling all the mental and life functions.

Besides these two, yoga recognizes a third area of energy which is dormant in the present state of human existence, except in a few people. This third area is the spiritual energy and it controls all the higher functions of the human being.

What is the mind according to hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Mind is energy. It is not emotion – it is not anger, passion or greed. Just as electricity is talked about and measured in terms of amperes, voltages, frequencies and ohms, so too the mind can be talked about and measured. The mind exists in a form in which the frequencies can be measured – its amperes can be measured. These energies – which are called mind and prana, and which the shastras call ida and pingala – are the main subject of hatha yoga.

The life force and mental force permeate the whole body, not only the parts of the body which are perceptible but every interior component and cell of the human body. Without prana, there is death. Without *chitta*, consciousness, there is no awareness. Consciousness and prana move within the body, but normally remain separate. When they unite and are in perfect balance at the top of the spinal cord, the mind undergoes a state of fission and energy issues forth. There is an explosion of knowledge, a moment when everything is seen as luminous.

This mind is not just a bundle of habits or a collection of *samskaras*, impressions. It is not Satan or a substance holding infinite potentiality within its depth. It is the totality of awareness, karmas, emotions, thoughts, and every action and reaction. Once the mind can be managed through the practices of yoga, one can handle oneself like a master and not like a slave.

It is one's mind that tells one what to do. Sometimes it even forces one to act against one's own wishes. The mind should not be suppressed, ignored or condemned, as *chitta* is *shakti*, a great force in every human which has to be tamed for evolution to continue.

According to hatha yoga, it is easier to conquer the prana first and then the mind. Therefore, the hatha yogis combined

asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha – which harmonize the pranas – as tools to conquer the mind.

If the body is a form of energy how can the mind, which is non-material, be energy?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yogis have maintained that just as a body is manifest, visible, compressed energy, in the same way the mind also has a structure, a form of energy which is subtle. The mind is not matter; it is energy. Just imagine compressing the electrical current in a wire into a small ball, until it becomes a ball of energy. In the same manner, the cosmic consciousness has compressed itself into a small ball and that has become the mind: the manifest mind is shakti. If the shakti was absent, the mind would be dead.

Emissions of the subtle mind can be experienced in the form of a thought, an emotion, a state, rationality or irrationality, positivity or negativity. What happens in the dimension of our mind ultimately influences our behaviour and performance. The original form of the mind is energy, and the mind emits energy which is subtle.

What are prana shakti and chitta shakti?

Swami Niranjanananda: According to yoga, the faculties of body and mind are subject to the influences of prana and chitta. *Prana shakti* is the vital energy, controlling the physical, sensory body. *Chitta shakti* is the mental energy, controlling the consciousness, the mind.

Surya, the sun, represents the pranic energy. *Chandra*, the moon, represents the mental energy. *Surya* is the energy which governs the world of matter. *Chandra* governs the subtle dimension of thought and mind.

In hatha yoga is ida nadi equivalent to the mind?

Swami Satyananda: *Pingala* is the pathway for prana. Besides prana, there is another shakti in the body called mind or consciousness, through which one is able to think, remember, analyze and differentiate. There are many mental faculties

within us and they are all the play or manifestation of the mental shakti.

Ida is the pathway for the mind. What is mind? Thought, emotions and fear, these are not mind. I am thinking, 'I am unhappy', but this is not mind. The light seen at night is not electricity; the same electrical energy runs in every generator and lights up the bulbs. It also runs the radio and television. What is electricity? Is a heater electricity? Is light electricity? Is a refrigerator electricity? No, they are manifestations of electricity.

Fear is not mind. Passion is not mind. They are manifestations of the mind, of *chitta vritti*. This physical body is a storehouse of energy, of prana. It is a storehouse of energy, of thought. Very few people know what the mind is. Even the professors of the mind know nothing about it. But yogis know what the mind is. It is homogenous reality. It is like an iceberg – only a little can be seen, the rest cannot. The mind is a terrific force and ida is the pathway for that consciousness.

What is the relationship of mind and prana in the body?

Swami Satyananda: The whole body is a composition of prana and mind. Pranas are responsible for action and motion in life. The mind is responsible for thinking and feeling. Together, mind and prana fill this living structure, penetrating it through and through.

Mind and prana are the two great forces in a person's physical system, and if they lose their balance, a corresponding imbalance is created in that person's mental and physical behaviour. The science of *hatha yoga* is based on these twin forces.

Prana can feed the mind, influence the mind and improve the mind. The effect of prana on the body is the same. Prana can operate on both the planes, on the mental plane and on the physical plane. On the physical plane, prana becomes life energy; on the higher plane, prana becomes spiritual or mental energy.

The individual is a combination of mind, prana and self. There comes a time in life when you become aware, when you begin to realize that the body is not final. The mind controls the body; the spirit, the *atma*, or self, controls the mind and body. When one becomes the master of the mind, one becomes the master of the body, but as long as one is a slave to the mind, the body will be full of disease.

Once a person becomes master of the self, then that person is master of the mind and the body. The pranas can be balanced by the practice of asanas and pranayamas. The mental force is balanced by the practice of concentration and meditation.

Is consciousness an attribute of matter?

Swami Satyananda: In yoga the philosophy is very simple; it presupposes using two points of energy in the body. The word 'energy' is used here to mean exactly that; it is not being used with a philosophical connotation. Just as there is energy in electrical cables, yoga postulates two kinds of energy in the physical body. These two kinds of energy are known as consciousness and light.

Consciousness is not a consequence of matter. In the yogic understanding, thought is not a consequence of the brain. According to yoga, consciousness and matter are two entirely different things. Prana is known as light. It controls the body's organs, its mobility, temperature, even the span of life. While there is prana, there is life – absence of prana means death. That is one type of energy.

The second energy is known as consciousness. It can also be called the mind, but consciousness is better. This consciousness is responsible for awareness, for knowledge, for the senses, cognition and perception.

Is the mind consciousness or energy?

Swami Niranjanananda: The mind has three functions: one, in the form of consciousness where its function is to know and realize; two, as subtle prana shakti, which is not solid like the body or physical organs, but is subtle and its body is

energetic; three, as an *indriya*, a sense organ, which connects the internal world with the outer world.

What is the role of shakti in the composition of the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: The greater mind, developed from the permutation and combination of consciousness and energy, is known as *mahat*. Mahat is composed of four different states of experience: *ahamkara* or ego, *buddhi* or intelligence, *chitta* or the inner mind where memories are contained, and *manas*, or the reflective rational mind. The distinction between them is felt only when any one state becomes predominant and is felt as an independent experience. According to tantra, at the cosmic level, consciousness and energy, Shiva and Shakti, live in harmony with each other. They exist as one. When they separate, when energy separates from consciousness or consciousness separates from energy, creation takes place.

The four aspects of mahat have both a positive and a negative aspect as they are all forms of shakti; *ahamkara* or ego is a form of shakti, *buddhi* is a form of shakti, *chitta* is a form of shakti, *manas* is a form of shakti. And shakti, the primordial power, has two roles to play, to unite and to separate, which is why it is known as *yoga maya*, the power of divine illusion.

How can the mind exist independently of the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: An article published in a scientific journal stated that mental functions are expressions of the electronic impulses in the brain. Modern science believes that matter, which is visible and tangible, is primary. It says that everything originated from matter. However, spiritual and yogic schools say that the brain and the mind are two different things. One can be brain-dead, but the mind continues to exist.

The mind is not just the conscious faculty with which one becomes aware of one's environment, but a power which is responsible for life and living, despite organic failures of the

body. The brain can die, other systems can stop functioning, but one can still continue to live because the mind continues to exist as energy.

What is the importance of prana in relation to the mind and its attributes?

Swami Niranjanananda: The totality of experiences of the gross, subtle and causal worlds become known due to prana. The mind and its attributes of buddhi, chitta and ahamkara are nothing but agents of the seed energy. He who attains knowledge of prana in its various manifestations and interactions with the visible and invisible environment attains prosperity and knowledge. In *Prashnopanishad* (2:13) it is written:

*Praanasyedam vashe sarvam tridive yatpratishthitam;
Maateva putraan rakshasva shreeshcha prajnaam cha vidhehi na iti.*

All that exists within the three worlds is under your direction. Oh Prana, grant us prosperity and knowledge and care for us like a mother cares for her son.

THE UNIVERSAL MIND

How does prana connect one to the Supreme Being?

Swami Sivananda: Prana is related to the mind, through the mind to will, through will to the individual soul, and through this to the Supreme Being. If one knows how to control the little waves of prana working through the mind, then the secret of subjugating universal prana becomes known. The yogi who becomes an expert in the knowledge of this secret has no fear from any power, as he has mastery over all the manifestations of powers in the universe.

What is the relationship between the cosmic mind, cosmic prana and the individual self?

Swami Sivananda: *Hiranyagarbha* is cosmic mind. He is the sum total of all the minds. The individual mind is connected with the cosmic mind. Cosmic mind,

hiranyagarbha, superconscious mind, infinite mind and universal mind are synonymous terms. Different authors have used different terms. Do not be puzzled. Do not be confused. Hiranyagarbha is also cosmic prana. He is the *sutratman*, thread-like Self. He represents the electric, cosmic powerhouse. The different *jivas*, individuals, are like the different small bulbs. Electricity from the powerhouse flows through the insulated copper wires into the bulbs. Similarly, the power from hiranyagarbha flows into the *jivas*.

What is meant by unification of consciousness?

Swami Satyananda: When the three states of knower, knowing and known merge as one experience, one-pointedness of mind arises and this becomes the state of cosmic or universal consciousness. While the three perceptions exist, there is individual mind.

The three states all emerge from the one state of consciousness. Knower is the subject, known is the object and the knowing is the link between the two. When the experience of subject and object is one undifferentiated experience there is unification of consciousness. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:60–62) it is written:

*Jneyam sarvam prateetam cha jnaanam cha mana uchyate;
Jnaanam jneyam samam nashtam naanyah panthaa dviteeyakah.*

*Manodrishyamidam sarvam yatkinchitsacharaacharam;
Manaso hyunmaneebhaavaad dvaitam naivopalabhyate.*

*Jneyavastuparityaagaadvilayam yaati maanasam.
Manaso vilaye jaate kaivalyamavashishyate.*

All that can be known, all that is known and the knowledge, is called mind. When the knower and that which is known are lost together, there is no dual or second way. (60)

All that is in this world, animate and inanimate, is the appearance of mind. When mind attains unmani (no-mind), duality is lost. (61)

All the known objects being abandoned, mind goes into absorption or is dissolved. When the mind is dissolved, then there will be liberation (kaivalya). (62)

How should the process of pranayama be understood in the highest terms?

Swami Niranjanananda: The understanding of pranayama as a process which begins with the breath but culminates in liberation is emphasized by Sri Shankaracharya. He says in *Aparokshanubhuti* (v. 118–120):

*Chittaadisarvabhaaveshu brahmatvenaiva bhaavanaat;
Nirodhah sarvavritteenaam praanaayaamah sa uchyate.*

*Nishedhanam prapanchasya rechakaakhyah sameerana;
Brahmaivaasmeetee yaa vrittih poorako vaayureeritah.*

*Tatastadvrittinaishchalyam kumbhakah praanasamyamah;
Ayam chaapi prabuddhaanaam ajnaanaam ghraanapeedanam.*

True pranayama is the control of all life-forces by realizing that all things such as the mind are nothing but Brahman. (118)

The negation of the universe is the outgoing breath. The thought ‘I am Brahman’ is called the incoming breath. (119)

The permanence of that thought thereafter is the restrained breath. This is the pranayama of the wise, while the pressing of the nose is only for the unknowing. (120)

Sri Shankaracharya is bringing attention to the fact that while the practices of pranayama do carry a physical component – the ‘pressing of the nose’ refers to *nadi shodhana pranayama*, alternate nostril breathing – the practitioner who limits himself to this aspect fails to realize the vast scope of pranayama. For pranayama is not merely the science of breath, but the science of universal energy, universal mind, time, space and matter.

It is a system through which the vital, pranic energy that holds the universe together is dynamized and redistributed at various levels of existence.

Can the energy of the individual mind connect with the universal energy?

Swami Niranjanananda: The mind is the subtle force or energy responsible for giving birth to an experience through the agency of the senses: recognizing them, realizing them, cultivating them, developing them and transforming them. The subtle power of the mind is present in everything in the form of *anu*, contained energy. The quality and nature of the mind is both *anu* and *vibhu*.

Anu means atomic, contained and defined, and *vibhu* means connected, expansive and broad. The mind in the *anu* form is contained within the body; it does not have any specific location in the body. It is part of every sense organ and sense experience. It is contained in vision – the moment you look at something, the mind becomes active. It is contained in hearing – the moment a noise comes to your ears, the mind becomes active. It is contained in taste – the moment you taste something, the mind becomes active. It is an inherent part of touch – the moment you touch something, the mind becomes active. Every sense organ, *indriya*, is connected with the mind; each and every part of the body is connected with the mind.

The second aspect of mind is *vibhu*, interconnected beyond the body. The sages and rishis have maintained that the higher quality of the mind is *vibhu*. All minds are interconnected, although you are not aware of this. When one is able to transcend the restrictions and limitations of the *anu* mind, then one connects with the *vibhu* mind. The expression of the *vibhu* mind is seen in the lives of yogis and realized beings.

Yogis have maintained that all minds are interconnected. Your mind and my mind are interconnected, but you are not aware of it. If I can become aware of that connection,

then I can know what is happening in your mind. If you can become aware of your connection, then you will know what is happening in my mind. It is fine-tuning the mind, just as a radio is fine-tuned to hear a station without any garbled sound. Such fine-tuning is achieved through *sadhana*, sustained practice.

In normal life, the anu or contained mind is lived. In spiritual life, the vibhu mind is lived; one connects one's mind with the universe. In the life of a spiritual aspirant, the anu mind has to be transformed into a vibhu mind. The anu mind relates to your own life and gives birth to your own desires and needs. Its nature is selfish. However, when the mind becomes vibhu its nature becomes expansive. It connects not just with oneself but with others, for the essence of the mind is energy and energy tends to join with energy. In *Hatharatnavali* (4:44) this process is described:

*Karpoorakamanale yadvat saindhavam salile yathaa;
Tadaa sandheeyamaanam hi manastatraiva leeyate.*

Just as camphor dissolves in fire and salt in water, in the same way the mind also merges (in Brahman).

How can the energy of the mind connect with the energy of the spirit?

Swami Niranjanananda: After having acquired a non-fluctuating and focused mind, identification with the inner self begins to take place. That awareness and identification with the inner nature is known as dhyana, meditation. In dhyana the mind becomes so subtle that its energies become one with the energy of the *atman*, the spirit. In *Hatharatnavali* (4:1) it states:

*Salilai saindhavam yadvat saamyam bhavati yogavit;
Tathaاتمamasoraikyam samaadhih so'bhidheeyate.*

Just as salt dissolved in water becomes one with it, so do spirit (atman) and the individual mind (manas) become one, and this blending is known as samadhi.

How can communication happen in the non-material dimension?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *prakriti*, or nature, the same energy and spirit is flowing in all aspects of creation. The communication between one's life force and the life force inherent in others is not mental, intellectual or verbal, but communication of thoughts and feelings. Many people have experimented with non-verbal communication.

The members of Findhorn in the United Kingdom were interested in communicating with plants, trees and flowers, as they believed it was possible to awaken the spirit of the *devas*, the illumined beings, within. In *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, the physicist Itzhak Bentov spoke of the energy being awakened in a lifeless rock through it being given worship and prayer over centuries. He discovered the simple principle of non-verbal communication. Spiritual masters have understood this connection and expressed it, not in a scientific manner, but through experience. They have come to the same conclusion – the mind is energy.

The body is matter, the senses are expressions of matter, but the mind, thoughts, feelings, emotions and spirit are all energy. Communication happens in the realm of energy, in the non-material dimension.

THE PRANAS AND THE MIND

How do prana and the mind relate to each other?

Swami Sivananda: Prana and mind are intimately related to each other. They stand together in the relationship of the supporter and the supported. They are like the flower and its odour or a sesame seed and the oil in it. If prana is controlled, the mind will also be controlled. If the mind is controlled, prana will automatically be controlled. If either of them is slain, then the other also will cease to exist. If the mind and prana cease to exist, then thoughts will not arise at all.

What is the importance of awakening one's prana?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga says that for progress in spiritual life it is fine to learn to concentrate, to meditate and to do sadhana, but one must awaken the prana shakti within. The awakening of prana shakti happens prior to controlling the mind.

What does spiritual evolution involve in relation to the mind and prana?

Swami Satyananda: Spiritual evolution is a process of mental involution, as one is trying to dissolve the individual process of perception. The process has to be a conscious experience, otherwise one will simply be entering a deep sleep. By working on the subtle, underlying structure of the mind and body, the principles constituting the mind are gradually disintegrated. Through shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, the physiological and subtle elements are controlled. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:21-25) it says:

*Pavano badhyate yena manastenaiva badhyate;
Manashcha badhyate yena pavanastena badhyate.*

*Hetudvayam tu chittasya vaasanaa cha sameeranah;
Tayorvinashtha ekasmin tau dvaavapi vinashyatah.*

*Mano yatra vileeyeta pavanastatra leeyat;
Pavano leeyate yatra namastatra vileeyate.*

*Dugdhaambuvatsammilitaavubhau tau tulyakriyau maanas-
amaarutau hi;
Yato maruttatra mana pravrittiriyato manashtrata marutpravrittih.*

*Tatraikanaashaadaparasya naasha ekapravritteraparapravrittih;
Adhvastayoshchendriyavargavrittih pradhvastayormokshapadasya
siddhih.*

Through restraining the prana, thought and counter-thought are restrained and through restraint of thought and counter-thought, prana is restrained. (21)

Chitta has two causes, vasana (deep-rooted desires) and prana. When one of the two is destroyed or inactivated the other also will become immobile. (22)

Where mind is stilled, then the prana is suspended there, and where prana is suspended, there the mind is still. (23)

Mind and prana are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is prana. (24)

Therefore, if one is annihilated, the other is eradicated; if one is active, the other becomes active, and while they exist, all the senses are active. If they are controlled, the state of liberation (moksha) is attained. (25)

The word *chitta* has two meanings. It is used to indicate mind, meaning individual consciousness, and memory, which is one aspect of the antahkarana. The whole finite mind, or finite consciousness is being considered here. In order to dissolve the whole finite mind, each of the *tattwas*, or elements, constituting it has to be separated. Just as if one were to separate hydrogen and oxygen from water, the water as a whole substance would no longer remain, similarly, when the principles constituting mind are separated, there is no longer finite perception.

Ida nadi channels the force of will and desire, *iccha shakti*; pingala nadi distributes the force to act, *kriya shakti*. If these two 'lines' are operating, the mundane experience of the individual body and mind is sustained. If they are disconnected there is no consciousness and no activity, as occurs in deep sleep. If they are 'plugged' into sushumna, consciousness and activity do take place, but it is no longer confined within the limitations of the individual body and mind. That is the experience of moksha.

Sense experience occurs when the consciousness, or chitta, is carried by shakti to the sense organs. If the shakti does not

carry the consciousness, there is no sensory experience, unless it is experienced psychically, directly through the higher brain centres. If there is no impetus to send the chitta shakti, the sense organs will not operate. The motivating forces which move the chitta shakti are desire and will. It is a vicious circle. Impressions, or samskaras, and deep-rooted desires, or vasanas, motivate the sense organs, and the sense organs create more samskaras by their contact with memory.

When the deep-rooted impressions are eliminated, then perhaps the mind can be controlled directly, through the mind. Until this is achieved it is necessary to control the flow of prana by restraining the sense organs. In fact, it is not until the highest stage of samadhi is achieved that these vasanas have no effect.

What is the role of the five pranas in relation to the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: There are five primary forces, known as *pancha prana*, which operate in the physical body at all times. *Prana shakti*, the one sustaining force, assumes these five fields to enable the body to accomplish its various functions. These five forces also act on subtler levels, influencing and in turn being influenced by the mind and consciousness. The seers identified these five pranas as: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana.

The five pranas maintain the balance between the physical and mental levels. Their physical locations are relevant in regard to the functions of the body; however, they function more homogeneously in the subtler levels of mind and consciousness, where their distinction is qualitative rather than physical.

Prana is the first of the pancha pranas. This prana is also known as *sthoola*, or gross prana to differentiate it from the all-pervasive vital force. Sthoola prana refers to the energy currents located in the thoracic region between the diaphragm and the base of the neck. Sthoola prana is experienced in the form of light particles moving upwards in the chest region.

At the level of mind, prana is responsible for the intake of impressions and ideas. Prana energizes all the koshas and is active all the time. It pervades the region from anahata up to vishuddhi chakra. When the force of prana is strong and flowing uninterruptedly, purer qualities of the heart, such as strength, courage and greatness are expressed. This prana is the energy by which one-pointedness of mind and intuitive knowledge can be experienced. It holds the intelligent energy of the soul, which abides in the heart. By enhancing this prana, the yogis reach the soul. In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (3:7:16), it is said:

*Yah praane tishthan praanaadantaro, yam praano na veda;
Yasya praanah shareeram, yah praanamantaro yamayati;
Esha ta aatmaantaryaaamyamritah.*

The intelligent soul is placed in prana, inside the prana, it pervades the prana, yet the non-intelligent are unaware of it. Prana itself has become the body of the chief master, who controls it from the inside. Thus the soul is immutable, indestructible and immortal.

Prana is the guide and medium for the realization of the soul. At the mental level, if the pathways of prana are not clear, one is not able to bring in positive impressions. It is difficult to concentrate or access intuitive knowledge.

Apana is the second prana, which operates in the pelvic region between the navel and the perineum. Apana is experienced in the form of light particles moving downwards in this part of the body. Apana brings energy down through the koshas. At the mental level, apana removes negative thoughts and emotions. When apana is imbalanced, there is a feeling of being pulled down by gravity, depression and negativity.

Samana is the third prana. It operates between the navel and the diaphragm. The word samana is derived from the root *saman*, meaning 'equal' or 'balanced'. Thus it acts as a balancer or equalizer for the two opposite forces of prana

and apana. Samana maintains the cohesion and balance between the koshas. Just as it helps digest food, samana is also responsible for digesting the mind-stuff. Samana, the equalizer, is disturbed whenever one's mental peace and harmony are disturbed.

Udana is the fourth manifestation, which operates in the extremities: the arms, legs, neck and head. This prana is responsible for all the sensory organs, *jnanendriyas*, and organs of action, *karmendriyas*. Udana allows one to perform positive mental work. It is responsible for sweet, melodious and impressive speech. It allows for the exchange of prana between the head and heart, thereby establishing contact between the subtle and causal bodies. Udana is experienced as spiralling flows of light down the arms and legs and up through the head.

Udana pervades ajna, bindu and sahasrara chakras. It brings energy up the koshas from the gross to the subtle. The activity of udana becomes extremely slow and subtle during meditation and samadhi. An irregular udana causes breathing troubles, inefficiency in physical and mental work, inability to think clearly or express oneself, uncoordinated speech, weakened will and lack of cheer.

Vyana, the fifth prana, pervades the whole body and acts as reserve energy. It helps all the other pranas when they require an extra boost. Vyana brings about circulation through all the five koshas and is responsible for their differentiation. It pervades the spatial element in the body, and is the vehicle of consciousness through the body. In the condition of excitement, due to its swift motion, it makes the mind excited and deluded. The motion of consciousness becomes intense at such times. When vyana, the expansive energy, is imbalanced, there is lack of coordination, tremors, inability to reach out to people, and the mind is erratic.

In the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna on raja yoga and hatha yoga. His basic advice is: unite prana with apana or unite apana with prana (4:29):

*Apaane juhvati praanam praane'paanam tathaa'pare;
Praanaapaanagatee ruddhvaa praanaayaamaaparaayanaah.*

Apana is absorbed in prana (by some), and prana in apana by others. By restraining the courses of prana and apana, (the yogi is) wholly occupied in pranayama.

The union of prana and apana, or apana and prana, or the suspension of both, can be attained through the practices of yoga. When pranayama is practised with inhalation, exhalation and retention, the union of prana and apana takes place at ajna chakra. In *Hatharatnavali* (2:60) it says:

*Praanaapaanau naadabindoo moolabandhena chaikataam;
Tato yogasya samsiddhim yachchhataam naatra samshayah.*

Prana and apana, nada and bindu having attained union through moolabandha, the yogi attains perfection in yoga. There is no doubt about it.

The union of prana and apana is one of the most important aims of yoga. Until the practitioner is able to channel these two forces, he continues to be under the influence of duality and the mind remains dissipated.

How do negative mental states affect the pranas?

Swami Niranjanananda: The *Prashnopanishad* draws an analogy between the pancha pranas and *yajna*, sacrifice, likening apana, vyana and prana to the yajna fire, samana to the priest, mind to the host, and udana to the fruit of sacrifice. The pranic process is indeed equivalent to the yajna process: energy is fed, life is infused and energy is emitted through the combined forces. Therefore, when all the pranas are balanced, the body and mind are in a state of optimized harmony. However, this is not usually the case. Due to overuse and misuse, the pranas of most people are in a state of imbalance.

In the course of daily life, worry and stress use maximum prana, so that the pranic fields become exhausted and

discharged. This in turn causes fatigue, depression, and inefficient digestion and circulation. As this vicious cycle continues, the body does not have the strength to walk, work or think, and the smallest disturbance causes nervousness and anxiety. In order to remedy this, the pranas need to be charged constantly, so their functioning is optimized and balance is maintained. This is the first objective of pranayama, which charges and replenishes the pranas through the practices. When the pranas are sufficiently charged, they are awakened.

How do thoughts influence the pranic or subtle energy system?

Swami Niranjanananda: The thoughts and *vrittis*, mental formations and modifications, exist in the mind and consciousness as energy waves. Therefore, they influence the energy patterns in the nadis directly and inherently. Depending on the nature of a thought or *vritti*, the respective nadis as well as the chakras, elements and doshas are affected, creating a spiralling effect throughout the energy network. If the thoughts are left unchecked, the energy system will be depleted over time. In this way the negative thought patterns and *vrattis* are reinforced and the mind is weakened. For this reason it is difficult to free oneself of obsessions and *samskaras*.

Indulging in an experience of arrogance, for example, will create a block in the manipura-anahata region and the network of nadis there. Every further wave of arrogance will fortify the block. A tendency to hold back will create a block in the anahata-vishuddhi region. These blockages in the nadis often manifest as disease in the *annamaya kosha*, physical body.

During pranayama, especially nadi shodhana, as one takes slow, deep breaths, the prana is forced to flow through the blocked areas, indeed, through the entire system of nadis. By this process, the energy circuits are restored and the weak areas gradually regain strength. Just as an emotion of

arrogance creates a blockage in the manipura/anahata region, increasing the pranic flow through the nadis of this region clears up the blockage. Thus the *Shiva Samhita* states (3.49):

*Poorvaarjitaani karmaani praanaayaamena nishchitam;
Naashayetsaadhako dheemaanihalokodbhavaani cha.*

Through the regulation of breath the wise practitioner surely destroys all of his karmas, whether acquired in this life or in the past.

Manu Smriti also tells us, “Let the defects be burnt up by pranayama.”

Even if one were unaware of one’s specific blocks, the very nature of pranayama, when practised correctly, is such that the entire energy circuitry is influenced and cleared over a period of time. Purification is achieved at the pranic level, and simultaneously at the physical and mental levels. This brings about many positive transformations.

Does a restless mind drain one’s energy?

Swami Niranjanananda: Attachment is born out of ego, as in ego there is a hidden desire to increase the size of the individual self. There is a hidden desire to impress others, there is a hidden energy to push back others and their experiences, and to assert ‘I’. When one looks at the mind objectively and observes different states manifesting, then attachment in some form or other will definitely be seen.

Due to this attachment, the mental energies become scattered and restless instead of remaining one-pointed. It is said that restlessness is the nature of the mind, but it must be realized that the amount of rest the mind receives when it is steady is not achieved in the restless state, and so restlessness cannot be the true nature of the mind. The mind can be compared to a small boy who is very restless all day, who keeps on running or jumping, but eventually reaches a point where he becomes calm and quiet and sleeps. In the same way, it is the nature of the mind to be restless, but the

basic position of the mind is to be calm, and in this calm state it once again charges itself with energy.

What is the method for harmonizing the energies of body and mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: The word *hatha* symbolizes two aspects within the body, *surya shakti*, solar energy, and *chandra shakti*, lunar energy. The mantra *ha*, represents the solar energy which is associated with prana shakti, the energy manifesting and governing the body. The mantra *tha* represents the lunar energy which is associated with chitta shakti, the energy which governs the subtle mental expressions and is responsible for the dynamism of the mind and the growth of consciousness.

The aim of hatha yoga is to balance the physical and mental activity, to harmonize the physical movement of prana and the mental experience of prana. That is its purpose. One is alive due to the presence of these two energies within. Due to prana shakti one experiences the vitality in the body and due to chitta shakti one experiences the activities of the mind. Thus, hatha yoga is the method to create synchronicity, harmony and balance between body and mind. Hatha yoga is perfected when one has complete control over prana shakti and chitta shakti. Hatha yoga is a method of harmonizing the flow of pranas in the body and thereby bringing the mind from a dissipated state to a focused state.

How does controlling prana shakti and chitta shakti wake up the kundalini?

Swami Satyananda: It is said that when prana is held in the entrance of sushumna and the moon and nectar are held in sahasrara, *kundalini*, the dormant spiritual energy, is deprived of both nectar and prana, and is woken up. Kundalini hisses angrily and rushes up to *bindu*, the nectar source, whereupon the nectar begins to flow down in an unbroken stream to ajna chakra, whence the whole system is saturated. The result is a

state of blissful intoxication. It is a process of transformation of experience due to the permeation of the body and mind with nectar which is triggered when the bindu is restrained and withheld. The body and mind become steady, and this is the foundation for monumental accomplishment in spiritual life. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:28) it is written:

*Manah sthairye sthiro vaayustato binduh sthiro bhavet;
Bindusthairyaatsadaa sattvam pindasthairyam prajaayate.*

When mind is still, prana is still, then bindu is still. By bindu being held still, there is always a sattwic state which produces steadiness in the body.

The yogi who can confine the flow of chitta shakti in ida at its source has stabilized the bindu so that nectar is not shed, and the nectar is, therefore, not dried by the prana. The source of bindu in the body is sahasrara chakra. The particular centre from which it issues its nectar is *bindu visarga*, the source of individual creation, at the top back portion of the head. Bindu also manifests in the lower centres of the body. When it is stable in the brain centre, then bindu in the lower regions is stable.

HATHA YOGA PRACTICES AND THE MIND

Are the practices of hatha yoga for the body or for the mind?

Swami Sivananda: All sadhanas are aimed at obtaining mastery over the mind.

How do hatha yoga practices support the mind during higher yogic sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: The body and mind should be structured in such a way that they remain unaffected by the mundane circumstances of worldly events. In this way the body-mind becomes like a tortoise which can extend its limbs when necessary or retreat into the protection of its hard shell when threatened. This is written in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:10):

*Asheshataapataptaanaam samaashrayamatho hathah;
Asheshayogayuktaanaamaadhaarakamatho hathah.*

For those continually tempered by the heat of tapa (the three types of pain: spiritual, environmental and physical), hatha is like the hermitage giving protection from the heat. For those always united in yoga, hatha is the basis, acting like a tortoise.

The limbs are symbolic of the external senses, which should be externalized when necessary, but which, at our command, can be internalized and unaffected by external happenings. To perfect this condition, Yogi Swatmarama advises the practice of hatha yoga, as it enables the necessary strength and control of the body and mind. The symbology of the tortoise is significant. The creation of the world we know is said to rest on the tortoise. It is an emblem of patient endurance. According to Hindu mythology, when dissolution of the universe started to take place, the earth lost its support and was threatened with destruction. Lord Vishnu came to the rescue and manifested in the form of a tortoise, supporting the earth on his back. Thereby the earth was saved.

Of course, this legend is not meant to be taken literally. It is the explanation of what happens during the process of creation and evolution, both externally and internally, and of movement back to the centre of being. As the individual consciousness moves closer to the real self, the supports on which the mind is dependent, i.e. the senses and sensorial world, become less influential. Consciousness can fall into a void if the mind completely dissolves without having a base to fall back on. Preservation of the mind and body must take place when the consciousness moves into higher states. The senses must be conditioned to retract and extend at will. The concept of Vishnu is an aspect of existence which links prana and consciousness to the physical body and creation.

In order to experience a higher or purer state of existence and still maintain the body-mind in the gross realm so that the consciousness can return, we have to be

prepared. The body and senses should be trained in such a way that consciousness is able to withdraw and come back again to continue the sensorial experiences. Hatha yoga is the process through which the body becomes like a tortoise so that the external form is not the breeding place of disease and disharmony, but rather a protective covering.

How does the effect of hatha yoga on the mind influence one's health and vitality?

Swami Niranjanananda: For the dynamic personality, yoga identified the series of practices which are today known as hatha yoga. Hatha yoga aims at awakening the vital forces in the body and mind. Yoga recognizes that there are two main forces governing one's life. In the physical dimension this force is experienced as sensorial vitality, and on the mental dimension it is experienced as the force of the mind. The practices of hatha yoga develop integration, balance and harmony in the expressions of physical and mental vitality. This vitality is recognized as prana, the life force, also responsible for the motion of the senses and the mental faculties.

Yoga believes that most of the stresses and tensions, illnesses and diseases which are physical or psychological in nature are caused by an imbalance in pranic vitality. Scientists who have investigated the effects of hatha yoga on the human body and mind have concluded that most psychosomatic diseases and illnesses can be effectively managed with the correct application of yoga practices.

It is known that psychosomatic problems arise due to stress and the inability to manage the situations that afflict the mind and body. It is known that stress is the cause of hypertension, cardiovascular problems, insomnia, mental imbalances, digestive, respiratory and circulatory problems. People have even forgotten how to relax and how to sleep. The question is, does one wish to live a life which has lost its inner harmony and in which one depends on chemicals to rest, relax and sleep?

The practices of hatha yoga play an important role as they recreate a balance in the energy, stamina and health of the body.

Why does hatha yoga recommend a sattwic diet?

Swami Sivananda: Food has a direct and intimate connection with the mind and plays a vital part in the make-up of the mind. A *sattwic* diet calms the mind. A *rajasic* diet excites the mind. A *tamasic* diet dulls the mind. Mark the difference in nature between a tiger which lives on flesh and a cow which lives on grass. Non-vegetarian food is not sattwic. It is not food for a spiritual seeker. Live for a month on milk and fruits and see. Give up meat for one month and see. Practical experience will tell you what is bad for the mind.

Food exercises an important influence on the mind. This is clearly seen every day – it is very difficult to control the mind after a heavy, sumptuous, indigestible meal; the mind runs, wanders and jumps like a monkey. Alcohol causes tremendous excitement in the mind.

Food plays an important role in meditation. For the purposes of meditation, the food must be light, sattwic and nutritious. The body is *annamaya*, made up of food. Light sattwic food, such as fruits and milk, take you to the *nirvikalpa* state, where the modifications of the mind cease, quite easily. The rishis lived on fruits and milk. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* says, “Pure food leads to purity of mind and then one attains *moksha*, liberation.” One should have dietetic discipline.

How does the physical effect of the shatkarmas influence the mind?

Swami Satyananda: The body has three faults – *kapha*, mucus, *pitta*, acid and *vata*, wind, known as the *doshas*. Imbalance in the doshas causes disease. In the same way, the mind has three faults. The first one is *mal*, impurity, the second is *vikshepa*, distraction, and the third is *avarana*, ignorance.

When visions float across the mind and the mind cannot be made steady due to constant oscillation, that is vikshepa. When the mind is unable to understand itself, that is called ignorance, avarna.

Through the practice of shatkarma the centres in the physical body which are responsible for arousing these doshas in the mind are stabilized. Shatkarma works on the physical body to influence the mind, brain waves and blockages of energy.

Why should one cleanse the body internally?

Swami Niranjanananda: Cleaning the body internally is as important as cleaning the body externally. How would it feel not to clean the mouth or brush the teeth for one week? If you do not know, then try it. Or how would it feel not to go to the toilet for a week? If you do not know, then try it.

Cleaning inside the body is necessary in order to experience harmony and balance within. Cleansing the body directly affects how the mind is experienced. If one's internal body is unclean then a certain disharmony will also be felt in the mind. Hatha yoga developed these shatkarma practices due to recognition of this tendency.

How can asana take the mind into higher states of awareness?

Swami Satyananda: Everybody has individual requirements depending on whether one's nature is basically tamasic, rajasic or sattwic. To attain higher experience the mind has to become totally absorbed in the point of concentration.

By practising only the meditation posture of siddhasana, and pranayama, a higher state of awareness can be aroused. Ultimately, when the mind is quiet and the body is fit for prolonged meditation, then all you need is siddhasana, the adept's pose. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:41) it says:

*Kimanyairbahubhih peethaih siddhe siddhaasane sati;
Praanaanile saavadhaane baddhe kevalakumbhake,
Utpadyate niraayaasaatsvayamevonmanee kalaa.*

When perfection is attainable through siddhasana, what is the use of practising many other asanas? When the flow of prana is stabilized, the breath stops spontaneously (kevala kumbhaka) and a mindless state (unmani) arises by itself.

However, people belonging to the tamasic or rajasic categories need to practise a series of asanas and other forms of yoga to raise their pranic and conscious capacity. If the mind is basically tamasic or rajasic it needs a proper outlet of expression, otherwise during meditation practice it will just become dull and sleepy or cause havoc, wander here and there.

If you are performing siddhasana and practising pranayama, there comes a stage when the two pranic forces, *apana* and *prana*, meet and the alternating tendencies of *ida* and *pingala* unite in *ajna chakra*. At that moment the mind becomes unified and the breath stops. However, the mind must have a definite point of focus such as a psychic symbol, the guru, a mantra or yantra, otherwise it will enter a state of void or *shoonya*. It is a combination of various elements which creates higher experience, not just an asana and stopping the breath.

How does pranayama benefit the mind?

Swami Sivananda: By practising pranayama, one can increase the mental energy and develop thought control and thought culture. This helps concentration and meditation. It makes the mind steady. It removes the veil of *rajas*, passion and *tamas*, inertia, that envelops *sattwa*, harmony. This burns the dross in the mind. By practising pranayama, the mind gradually moves from the gross to the subtle. The nadis are purified. The mind is made firm and steady and thereby rendered fit for concentration. The dross of the mind is cleansed by pranayama, just as the dross of gold is got rid of by melting. A hatha yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through pranayama.

Why does hatha yoga focus on controlling the pranas rather than the mind?

Swami Satyananda: The hatha yoga texts state very clearly that by controlling the pranas, the mind is automatically controlled. It seems that prana and mind exert an influence on each other. When the pranas are restless, it affects the mind and vice versa. Some people find it easier to control the mind than to control the prana, but most people cannot control the mind by the mind. The more they try, the more the split grows.

Sometimes one feels healthy, inspired and one-pointed, but it does not happen every day. Therefore, the authors of hatha yoga said, 'Don't worry about the mind. Ignore it. Practise pranayama.' By practising pranayama correctly, the mind is automatically conquered.

What is the effect of pranayama on the energy of the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: Not only from the yogic perspective but also from the scientific point of view, matter is nothing but compressed energy. This body is nothing but compressed energy. Wood and metal are nothing but compressed energy. Everything is a form of energy.

The literal meaning of the word *pranayama* is increasing the dimension of prana – *prana*, energy, plus *ayama*, expansion. Another meaning of pranayama is controlling and guiding the flow of prana as it manifests through the senses and through the mind – *yama*, to hold, plus prana, energy – to restrain the prana shakti.

One begins to hold on when it is realized that one's energies are being wasted in useless pursuits of the senses which are not going to give satisfaction or happiness. Then one begins to withdraw and to focus one's attention on something else. That is holding back, withdrawing, restraining the association of the senses with the sense objects.

When the prana shakti is withdrawn, the senses become weak and then the corresponding part in the mind also loses its intensity. The obsessive desire becomes more dissipated,

less focused; it loses its obsessive aspect and simply becomes a desire which can be adjusted, accommodated and even manipulated.

Through pranayama one is able to activate the subtle flow of prana shakti and once prana shakti is awakened, the vital forces of the body are harmonized with the vital energies of the mind. The purpose of pranayama is to fuse the mind with prana shakti. This frees the mind from its material and gross identifications and awareness, and makes it self-contained. Prana which is subtle, is known as the mind.

Does kapalbhati influence the physical, pranic and mental energies in such a way that ajna chakra is awakened?

Swami Niranjanananda: The dimension of consciousness known as the mental body is experienced and made manifest through the practices of kapalbhati, a technique of pranayama and a practice of the hatha yoga shatkarnas, and trataka, steady gazing. Just as the pranic nadis have to be cleared, mental awareness also has to be freed from the fetters that bind it to the world of senses and objects. Kapalbhati is used for this purpose. The reason for practising kapalbhati is to focus the dissipated mental energies and to clear the mind and awareness of mental toxins.

It is not kapalbhati which awakens ajna, but the reaction which takes place when one is able to perform a pranayama practice correctly that helps to awaken various chakras. Kapalbhati stimulates the nerves; they in turn activate the nadis, which then activate the pranas; the pranas are attracted towards the region in the nervous system where activity is taking place, which in kapalbhati is the forehead. It is not the same kapalbhati that is generally known and practised but a different kind of kapalbhati, the purpose of which is to raise the pranic energy of the body and concentrate it at ajna chakra. Once this pranic energy is centred at ajna chakra, it can be redirected to awaken the other psychic centres.

The practice of kapalbhathi is also taught as a part of the technique of *prana vidya*, the knowledge and control of prana. Nowadays this method of kapalbhathi is not generally taught or practised by yoga students. In fact, very few people know what the technique is. It is not simply the bellows breathing that is usually performed in pranayama practice, although the name is the same. The same breathing is used but certain mudras and bandhas are combined with it.

The practice of kapalbhathi has an influence over the first three koshas. It begins as an annamaya practice using physical movements, the breathing process, the bandhas and the mudras. The aim, however, is to awaken the pranic energy, *pranamaya kosha*, and to tranquillize the mental activity, *manomaya kosha*.

According to the yogic concept, there are physical, mental and pranic biorhythms. When these three waves reach a certain point, there is harmony in the koshas. This harmony is experienced in the form of a clear mind, thought and expression, increased nervous, emotional and mental energies, and good health, physical fitness and mental relaxation. The biorhythms undergo many changes in the course of one's daily activities.

Knowledge of these rhythms at the time of kapalbhathi practice makes one deeply aware of the pranic and mental states. Kapalbhathi helps to control the mental state by influencing the physical level, by altering the experiences, the input and output of the nervous system and the brain, and speeding up the metabolism. In the context of hatha yoga, kapalbhathi is practised to achieve a totally one-pointed state of mind. For the sake of understanding, the practice of kapalbhathi may be compared to the state of pratyahara. In pratyahara we try to divert the mind from external distractions and focus it at one point, then in the practice of dharana we try to intensify the concentration. In kapalbhathi, like pratyahara, we try to relax the dissipation of the annamaya, manomaya and pranamaya koshas. The aim of kapalbhathi is to awaken ajna chakra.

How do the mudras influence the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: The Sanskrit word *mudra* is translated as ‘attitude’ or ‘gesture’. Attitude is something which reflects mind in body, and body in mind. With a little observation, we can learn a lot about someone’s mental state by the way they walk, sit, act, and so on. A person who is frightened will walk quite differently from someone who is angry. This body language is a constant communication between the annamaya kosha, physical body, and the other koshas, via the network of *nadis*, energy channels, in the pranamaya kosha, pranic body. Even simple hand or facial gestures will have a corresponding ‘gesture’ in the subtle body.

Tantra has developed this knowledge into a system of mudras which are specific attitudes of the body relating to specific attitudes of mind. The mudra may be a whole body position or a simple finger position, but the effect is transmitted through all levels of the *pancha kosha*, the five dimensions of being, and the appropriate signal is transferred from the gross to the subtle.

This flow of information through the pranayama kosha is a two-way process. People experiencing altered states of consciousness have been known to perform mudras spontaneously, representing a transmission from subtle to gross. Conversely, we can reverse the signal and send a message to the mind by adopting a physical attitude or mudra. The effects are extremely subtle. It would require great sensitivity for someone to be able to perceive a change of consciousness simply by joining the thumb and index finger together, but with practice the mind becomes conditioned to this signal, and when this hand position is adopted, the signal for meditation is transmitted.

What practices are recommended for stabilizing the pranas and the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: By practising asanas the body gains steadiness and strength. When the asana is steady, the physical body becomes stable, or one can say the experience

of stability and strength in annamaya kosha can be obtained by the practice of asanas. After annamaya kosha, the physical body, manomaya kosha, the mental body, and pranamaya kosha, the energy body, remain.

The mind is restless at first, and it is the same with prana. In *Gheranda Samhita* stability or steadiness includes the stability of pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha. According to Sage Gheranda, stability is first achieved through the practice of mudras. The purpose of the mudras is to stop this pranic restlessness and to bring one-pointedness to bindu visarga, after first controlling mental restlessness. The prana shakti must be made calm and quiet, but how and where? In *Gheranda Samhita* (1:10) it is written:

*Shatkarmanaa shodhanam cha aasanena bhaveddridham;
Mudrayaa sthirataa chaiva pratyahaarena dheerataa.*

Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara patience is achieved.

This steadiness means that the wavering mind and the prana are controlled. Gestures can be understood as physical states through which the pranic energy can be focused. The uncontrolled activities of both prana and the mind cease with mudras and become steady; with the practice of mudras, the mind quickly becomes focused and internalized.

The different forms of prana need to be understood. One form of prana is observed in the pancha pranas, the five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. Another form is observed in the chakras, the psychic centres. In fact, one form of prana is in mooladhara, a second in swadhisthana, a third in manipura, a fourth in anahata and a fifth in vishuddhi. The prana existing in the chakras and pancha pranas are two different states of prana. The experience of the pancha pranas is a gross state relative to the experience of prana shakti in the chakras, which is a much subtler state.

Sage Gheranda brings the process and experience of the gross and subtle pranas under the control of consciousness through the practices of bandha, mudra and dharana. As long as there is no conscious control over the prana, the energy cannot be consciously awakened or produced. Therefore, for the smooth and controlled flow of prana, he advocates the practice of mudras first of all to focus the mind on one-pointedness and to stop its external restlessness.

Pratyahara comes next in the sequence. He goes on to explain that by pratyahara, mental stability and patience are achieved. Patience is to be attained by controlling *manas shakti*, the mental energy, by mental concentration. In order to bring manomaya kosha under control and make oneself balanced, it is important to first of all attain one-pointedness of mind.

Following this, pranayama practices are discussed. An effort is then made to enter into another region of prana through pranayama; this is achieved after gaining conscious control over the gross and subtle pranas.

With these practices of pratyahara and pranayama, an effort is made to take the mind to another state which comes when restlessness has subsided.



2

Hatha Yoga and the Brain

INTERACTION OF HATHA YOGA WITH THE BRAIN

According to hatha yoga, how does ajna chakra interact with the mind and brain?

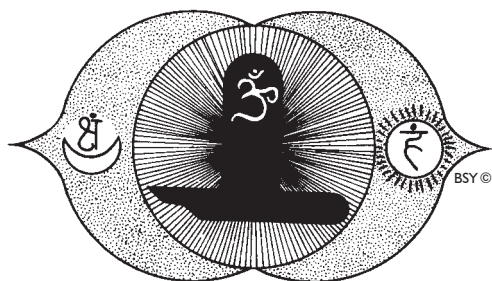
Swami Sivananda: According to the hatha yoga school *ajna chakra*, which consists of two lotus petals and is situated in the space between the two eyebrows, is the seat of the mind.

The mind has various faculties and centres, and operates through corresponding physical centres in the brain. Mind, buddhi and understanding are in the *linga sharira*, subtle body, but they operate through the physical brain. The brain is not the mind. The mind has its seat in the physical brain. It gains experiences of this physical universe through the vibrations of the brain.

A king, though he has complete sway over his whole territory, though the whole kingdom belongs to him, has special places for his residence. He has a splendid palace in the capital and another beautiful, palatial building in Mussoorie or Mount Abu for his stay in summer.

In the same way, the mind, though it is all-pervading in the body, has three places to reside during the three states of *jagrat*, the waking state, *swapna*, dreaming, and *sushupti*, deep sleep. The seat of the mind in deep sleep is in the heart. During dream, the seat of the mind is in the neck. In the waking state, the seat of the mind is the third eye or

ajna chakra. Notice what one does in deep thinking. One holds one's finger under the chin, turns the neck towards the right side, turns the gaze towards the space between the two eyebrows, and then begins to think seriously about the problem at hand: the seat of the mind is ajna chakra.



Ajna chakra

What influence does conscious breathing have on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: Through the breath the involuntary processes of the body, brain and mind can be mastered. Control over these processes enables one to direct the major course and destiny of one's life and death. It has been established that conscious breathing is registered in the frontal brain, which is responsible for evolution and higher awareness, while spontaneous breathing is a process of the primitive brain, once again validating the accuracy of yogic knowledge.

Breathing is a unique vital process, which normally functions unconsciously, yet one also has the ability to breathe consciously. Other unconscious processes, such as the heartbeat, body temperature and metabolic activity, cannot be controlled by the average person. Unconscious breathing is controlled by the medulla oblongata in the brain stem, a region known as the primitive brain, while conscious breathing comes from the more evolved areas of the brain in the cerebral cortex. Conscious breathing, therefore, engages the cerebral cortex and stimulates the more evolved areas of the brain.

The regular practice of pranayama over a period of time reinforces cortical control of the breath, a process called telencephalization, where one shifts from unconscious to conscious breathing with profound effects on one's wellbeing. During conscious control of the breath, the cerebral cortex bypasses the respiratory centre in the brain stem. Impulses from the cortex also affect adjoining areas of the brain concerned with emotions. The involvement of the cerebral cortex in conscious breathing causes the cortex to develop and allows the individual to enter higher stages of the evolutionary cycle.

Conscious breathing begins with the awareness: "I am breathing in; I am breathing out." The awareness is an aspect of consciousness and the breath is a vehicle of prana. In this way, prana and consciousness move together. Awareness of the breath implies that one is simultaneously aware of the consciousness. By the practice of conscious breathing, the witness aspect develops and the expansion of consciousness begins.

Conscious breathing has a calming effect on the mind. Even simple breath awareness, without exerting any control over the natural pattern of the breath, will induce a regular and relaxing rhythm of breathing. This is an effective method of quietening a tense mind. The more complex breathing techniques of pranayama influence the brain even more deeply. There is no other system like pranayama which has such an immediate influence on the nervous system, brain and mind.

How does hatha yoga affect the relationship between the mind and the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: All the various systems of the body and the activities that go on in them are directed by the brain. Both the conscious and subconscious mind have a direct influence on the brain's activity – this is seen in the form of brain waves.

When the conscious mind directs the activity of the brain, beta and alpha rhythms predominate, reflecting a state of mental activity, alertness and relaxation. When the subconscious mind directs the activity of the brain, theta and delta rhythms predominate, reflecting a state of concentration, one-pointed perception, awareness and introversion. When there is intense activity in an emotional, physical or mental frame, the brain waves can influence the whole system positively or negatively. They do this by blocking the perceptions of the conscious and subconscious mind, which then turn into tension, or by bringing the whole system to a state of intense sensitivity, receptivity and activity, thereby developing the creative capacities in man.

When asanas are practised by stretching the body in different directions, the muscular structure, tissues, bones and nervous system are relaxed, and the internal organs such as the liver, kidneys, intestines and stomach are massaged. It is a gentle toning. In this way the whole body is brought into a state of balance. When one feels balanced inside, physically free from tension and stress, free from stiffness and tightness, then that physical harmony influences the activity of the brain.

Can hatha yoga awaken the dormant areas of the brain?

Swami Satyananda: *Prana shakti* and *chitta shakti* are both physical energies. *Atma shakti*, the third type of energy, is spiritual. It is non-physical, transcendental, formless energy. Mooladhara chakra produces both the physical and spiritual energy, but the spiritual energy is from a larger generator and it cannot be conducted by either ida or pingala. For this there is another line called *sushumna*, which conducts the spiritual energy from mooladhara straight up to sahasrara in order to open the whole brain.

Yogasanas awaken and regulate the glandular secretions and pranic forces, resulting in physical, mental and spiritual efficiencies. Awakening the pranic forces in the body intensifies the awareness, and the higher unexplored brain centres are

harnessed. Therefore, yogasanas, if done scientifically and with full precautions, give astonishing results.

Most people only use a small percentage of their mental potential. The brain contains infinite knowledge, experience, and power, but it cannot be used, as there is no conscious force. When sushumna conducts this spiritual energy to sahasrara chakra in the crown of the head, the dormant parts of the brain become active. They then give not only mental health, but also spiritual wealth. When the practitioner of yoga is able to awaken kundalini and connect it with sahasrara through sushumna nadi, he becomes the master of the body, mind and spirit.

What hatha yoga practices help to awaken the dormant centres in the brain?

Swami Satyananda: Seers and sages have proved that it is possible to develop the sleeping centres, the dormant centres of the brain by certain hatha yoga practices.

One such method is pranayama. Pranayama is a technique of breathing or controlling the breath. The breathing process is intimately connected with the brain. By practising pranayama, the latent cells, those centres of higher power in the brain, are ignited, stimulated and brought into operation.

There is a widespread impression that pranayama is only useful for the expansion of the lungs, resulting in more oxygen entering the body. Similarly, some people think that the practice of asanas, the yogic postures, is only meant for those who suffer from a physical illness or want to lose weight.

The ancient scriptures, however, reveal more about yoga than is commonly known, and scientific experiments are proving that asanas and pranayamas work by stimulating the brain and central nervous system. By stimulating millions of brain cells, psychic awareness develops. Therefore, the practice of asanas and pranayamas hastens the evolution of the grey matter, composed of brain cells. Yoga stimulates the process beyond the natural evolutionary cycle. The benefits and results

of this stimulation are too numerous to describe, and can be realized only by personal investigation into yoga.

What are the effects of bandhas on the brain and mind?

Swami Satyananda: Contraction at the physical level activates and awakens dormant faculties in the brain and mind. This occurs during the practice of the bandhas – each physical and pranic location of the bandhas is related neurologically to a specific area in the spinal cord and brain, and therefore the psyche. Mastery of the bandhas leads to the fullest realization of our potential.

What is the yogic understanding of the different mental states reflected by the brainwaves?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yogis did not have the concept of beta, alpha, theta and delta waves, but they had the concept of jagrat, swapna, sushupti and turiya, the four states of the mind. There is a distinct pattern of mental waves in all four states.

Jagrat describes full activity of the mind and brain, and in this full activity there is dissipation of energy. Science has recognized this recently. When beta waves are predominant in the brain, there is dissipation, activity and distraction. One is not relaxed, centred, balanced or focused.

Swapna is literally translated as the state of dream, but in yoga it does not mean dream but a relaxed mind, one contained within itself. It is aware and alert. Swapna is the mind looking inwards. Jagrat describes the mind looking outwards, identifying name, form and idea, recognizing different things. That is *jagrat avastha*, the externally awake state. But in swapna, when the mind is looking inwards, it is seeing the internal experience, not the external objects. That inner experience of name, form, idea, and quality is the same as the outer one; the same thing that is perceived outside, in swapna avastha is perceived inside. So we begin to dream. We begin to see the images that are ingrained in our psyche, in our mind, and that is then recognized as dream.

If I see you outside in jagrat, in swapna I will see you inside. When one sees everything, the vision, the picture, the images inside, the senses are focused inwards and the experience of the mind is more passive. The alpha brainwave experience is a passive experience.

Next comes *sushupti*, where there is no re-creation of the outer objects in the inner mental world; there is an absolute blank, deep relaxation, theta waves. When one goes deeper into that state of relaxation and is able to experience inner tranquillity, that is the *turiya* state. Intense concentration gives rise to the delta state, the identification or experience of deep relaxation which leads to harmony, balance and peace.

Pranayama is the activation of prana shakti in these mental states and in the brain. Often one may notice upon waking in the morning that, in spite of having slept for eight or ten hours, physically and mentally one is still totally exhausted. This indicates that sleep does not replenish prana shakti. Sleep only relaxes the body. The source of prana shakti is not sleep, it is the activation of ida and pingala nadis, and this activation is the purpose of pranayama.

What happens in the brain when sushumna is activated?

Swami Satyananda: Without generating kundalini shakti there is no possibility of transcending empirical existence. The average mind and body function on a very low 'voltage' of energy. For higher experience to take place a super boost of energy is required to activate the brain centres. This can only be accomplished when the fluctuating energies of ida and pingala are absorbed into mooladhara and exploded through sushumna nadi in the centre of the spinal axis.

Activation of sushumna means that the whole brain will awaken. If kundalini goes through either ida or pingala then only half the brain and nervous system is activated. Kundalini must ascend through sushumna so that the entire central nervous system is activated, not only the parasympathetic or sympathetic nervous system. Kundalini is not just a mystical name. It is the name of the potential force inherent in every

human being. Man has not yet utilized his full capacity to live and experience. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:105) it states:

*Uddhaatayetkapaatam tu yathaa kunchikayaa hathaat;
Kundalinyaa tathaa yogee mokshadvaaram vibhodayet.*

Just as a door is opened with a key, similarly the yogi opens the door to liberation with kundalini.

Opening the door to liberation is not an easy task. First there must be preparation. The spinal pathway of sushumna has to be cleaned. The chakras have to be opened and activated. If the door is opened before this takes place, consciousness may enter into a dark, dingy dungeon instead of a sparkling, illumined palace. One should practise hatha yoga under the guidance of an adept guru. This is the only way and it is the short way.

How do the hatha yoga practices affect the cerebral fluid?

Swami Satyananda: Sometimes during kundalini awakening one may feel very dizzy, sometimes one has the experience of illumination, or visions of angels or goddesses. This is all brought on by the activity of the brain which is influenced by the composition of the cerebral fluid which bathes the brain.

Depending on this composition the related experiences vary enormously. The purpose of hatha yoga practices is ultimately aimed at keeping this fluid perfectly pure and healthy, as experiences in the awakening of kundalini largely depend on the condition of the brain and the nature of the fluid. When the cerebral fluid is purified it has a powerful positive influence on awakening the silent areas of the brain.

Therefore, it is essential that the physical system is purified through the practices of hatha yoga. The practices of *neti*, nasal cleansing, or the cleansing kriyas for the stomach, or shankhaprakshalana for the digestive tract, are ultimately intended for this purpose. After these practices of hatha yoga and subsequent purification of the physiological system, sirshasana, the headstand pose, does wonders by

increasing the blood flow to the brain, and increasing the consumption of oxygen.

What is manonmani?

Swami Satyananda: When a steady flow of *prana*, energy, moves through sushumna, there is equilibrium and the mind becomes still. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:42):

*Maarute madhyasanchaare manahsthairyam prajaayate;
Yo manahsusthreebhaavah saivaavasthaa manonmanee.*

The breath (*prana*) moving in the middle passage makes the mind still. This steadiness of mind is itself called the state of *manonmani* – devoid of thought.

When the frequency of the energy is such that there is perfect stillness of thought and activities, and there is no awareness of the external or internal world, that is *manonmani avastha*. *Manonmani* means ‘absence of individual mind’; absence of fluctuations in the individual consciousness, and absence of conscious, subconscious and unconscious states.

By cutting off the external stimuli to the brain over a long period of time, the conscious functions of the brain ‘turn off’ and *shoonya* or void is experienced. This state of *shoonya* or nothingness often leads to the more positive experience of *manonmani*.

What happens in the brain when kundalini awakens?

Swami Satyananda: How is one to awaken the total brain? By the practice of pranayama, kundalini is awakened. What is kundalini? There is an energy centre at the root of the tailbone known as mooladhara chakra. There is a hotline between this centre and the highest brain centres. When this centre is exploded, a vast amount of energy is released. That energy reaches the higher centres of the brain, and as a result, all the centres in the brain begin to function.

The following analogy illustrates the point. Imagine a city. There are about 20,000 houses, railway stations, radio

and television stations, government houses, offices and all the facilities one finds in a city. But no electricity is being supplied, so there is nobody in the city! Everything exists, but nobody is living there, as there is no energy. Energy cannot be supplied, as there is no surplus energy in the power station.

Then another power station is opened and there is surplus energy. The city is connected. Now every house has electricity and people can live there. It is the same with the brain. Much of the mental capacity is dormant. The energy that comes from outside is not sufficient. Extra energy is needed; high voltage energy is needed.

The normal energy is extremely limited. This energy is sufficient for digesting food, for lifting weights, for running, going up and down and for a little bit of thinking. But if one wants to bring other parts of the brain into operation, then one needs to connect it with a higher power house.

Where is the power house? It is in the lowest part of your body. In kundalini yoga this power house is known as mooladhara chakra. How is this power house to be awakened? By practising pranayama.

SWARA AND THE BRAIN

Why is it important in hatha yoga to know about the flow of breath in each nostril?

Swami Satyananda: When ida or the left nostril is flowing, then the right side of the brain is active and the left is quiet. When the right nostril or pingala is flowing, then the left side of the brain is active and the right is quiet. What happens when both ida and pingala flow together? This is known as the awakening of sushumna, when both sides of the brain function simultaneously.

It is said that when ida is flowing, one should do mental work, and when pingala is flowing, physical work. But when sushumna is flowing one should not work at all, as the opening of sushumna is the awakening of the whole brain.

When sushumna begins to flow, *dhyana*, meditation, becomes spontaneous, automatic, one doesn't have to do anything – close the eyes and meditation takes place. This is the direct method, dealing with the mind through the mind itself. For most aspirants, however, the indirect method, dealing with the mind through the physical body, is necessary to reach it. This is why the practices of hatha yoga are so important for the aspirant of dhyana.

What is the connection between the temperature of the breath and the activity in the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: Concentration on the temperature of the air going in and out of the nostrils helps to balance the activities of the two hemispheres of the brain. In hatha yoga it is said that the flow of breath is connected with the activation of the left and right brain hemispheres, and research has shown that the flow of the breath in the two nostrils stimulates and alters the functions of brain hemispheres. The flow in the right nostril stimulates the left hemisphere and the flow in the left nostril stimulates the right hemisphere.

In yogic theory, the right nostril is the location of *pingala nadi*, the source of heat and vitality, and the left nostril is the location of *ida nadi*, the source of coolness and tranquillity. If the mind can be merged with the experience of breathing and the temperature of the breath, it is possible to induce changes in the brain wave patterns. This change can be achieved through concentration and awareness that one is breathing in and out, while observing the temperature of the breath.

At home or at work, when one is mentally and emotionally fatigued, feeling tired and drained of vitality, and there is nervous, muscular and emotional tension, simply close the eyes for a few minutes. Watch the flow of the breath in the nostrils and observe the temperature of the breath. Feelings of calmness and control over one's self and expressions will develop. This experiment can be tried at any

time in an environment where there is a lot of stimulation and stress. It allows one to experience the change in the pattern of the brain waves, which is subjectively felt as greater relaxation and control over the personal, emotional and intellectual expressions.

How do changes in the swara affect the experience of meditation?

Swami Satyananda: If ida is flowing when meditation is being practised, one gets sleepy, the brain produces delta waves, and a state of mind arises called *laya*, a state of unconsciousness or total absorption in the thought processes. If the right nostril is flowing when one tries to meditate, events concerning the outside world will be experienced, the brain will produce beta waves and many thoughts will occur at the same time.

When both nostrils flow equally, sushumna is flowing. When sushumna flows, there is no difficulty meditating, and one is more likely to experience the planes which are real, which are pure, and which are on the path to real knowledge. Therefore, to have success in meditational practices, make sure that sushumna is flowing. Awakening sushumna, making sushumna nadi flow, is the most important aim in yoga.

BRAIN LATERALIZATION

What is the role of hatha yoga in balancing the brain hemispheres?

Swami Niranjanananda: The dual nature of the human psycho-physiological framework is reflected in the physical structure of man's brain and central nervous system. Neuro-physiological and psychological research studies have demonstrated that the two hemispheres of the brain are actually responsible for different abilities and characteristic modes of expression of human individuality.

The right hemisphere is responsible for the spatial, artistic, holistic, intuitive and psychic side of perception,



Ardhanarishwara

which are ida nadi functions. The left hemisphere is responsible for the logical, rational and analytical faculties, and sequential and linear modes of thought, which are pingala nadi functions.

The left side of the brain has more centres for verbal communication, although both hemispheres contain centres for different aspects of hearing, reading, talking and writing. Formal education takes place more through verbal communication than non-verbal, hence, the left

cerebral lobe is referred to as the dominant lobe. The left lobe has 'male' qualities of competitiveness, selfishness and aggression, while the right cerebral lobe is endowed with the 'feminine' qualities of love, compassion and nurturing. By balancing ida and pingala nadis, the personality of *Ardhanarishwara* is created in which the male and female qualities are balanced.

In terms of swara yoga, the right side of the brain is activated when the left nostril is flowing, the left side of the brain is activated when the right nostril is flowing, and whenever both nostrils flow equally, every faculty of the human brain is functioning in an optimal and integrated manner as sushumna nadi awakens. The alternating rhythm of the nasal cycle is necessary for the nervous system as it allows for the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems to operate rhythmically, influencing the behaviour and rhythm of all the other organs in the body and maintaining an inherent balance. The moment the rhythm of the brain is disturbed, the effect spreads through every system of the body. In a mind which is full of anxiety, insecurity or fear,

the circuits of the brain are tied in knots. The practice of pranayama restores balance in the ida and pingala nadis and regulates the brain.

Research has also demonstrated the extremely rich and sensitive enervation of the nasal membranes. Studies have shown the presence of twenty times more autonomic nerve fibres within this membrane than in the cerebrospinal (central nervous) system. During inhalation, the flow of air in each nostril stimulates specific unilateral autonomic nerve centres lying within and beneath the mucous membranes, which influence the autonomic processes of respiration, circulation, digestion and so on.

In fact, the whole region of the nasal mucous membrane has been defined as a distinct organ of the autonomic nervous system by some researchers. This means that it responds to various physical and mental situations of arousal, activity, stress and relaxation. In this light, the far-reaching effects of pranayama practices can be understood. Aimed as they are at balancing ida and pingala, the practices thus influence the whole autonomic nervous system, and therefore bring the entire body-mind complex into a state of balance and equilibrium.

Many yogic practices, such as nadi shodhana pranayama, neti and the use of the yoga danda, directly influence the balance of breath in each nostril, inducing sushumna nadi to flow and meditation to supervene. Research at the Kaivalyadhama Institute, Pune, India, has validated the efficacy of the ancient device of the *yoga danda*, a stick placed under the armpit, which is traditionally used by yogis to manipulate the flow of breath in the nostrils. The study verified that the breath in the nostril opposite the yoga danda became markedly freer than that of the nostril of the same side in all subjects, irrespective of age or sex.

The yoga danda rests on the ground while being held under the armpit of the meditating individual. The ancient yogis found that by leaning slightly on this rod and applying sustained pressure in one armpit, the flow of breath in the

opposite nostril was enhanced. They used this principle during meditation practices to maintain a balance between the two nostrils, equalizing the flows of ida and pingala nadis, so that sushumna remained open and successful meditation continued.

For the average person, the brain functions in a balanced, equalized manner for only a few minutes every one and a half hours when the breathing cycle reverses. However, proper use of the yoga danda as well as other yogic practices, including pranayama, induce an ongoing balance in both nostrils, enabling yogis who follow this path to maintain longer periods of sushumna flow. In this way, meditative awareness may be experienced for hours or days at a time.

The *Shiva Swarodaya*, the principle treatise on swara yoga, states (v. 270):

*Svarajnaanabalaadagre nishphalam kotidhaa bhavet;
Iha loke paratraapi svarajnaanee balee sadaa.*

Millions of other powers are useless before the strength of the swara. One who has this knowledge is always powerful both in this world and the next.

Why does nadi shodhana balance the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: The alternate nostril breathing technique used in nadi shodhana pranayama affects the brain hemispheres by alternately stimulating the right brain and then the left brain. The flow of breath through each nostril stimulates the opposite side of the brain via nerve endings just beneath the mucous layer inside the nostrils. Each side of the body is governed by nerves originating in the opposite side of the brain. The stimulation of the nostrils by the flow of breath increases nervous activity in the brain on the opposite side of each nostril.

COGNITIVE AND MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

How can hatha yoga help young people develop their cognitive and creative potential?

Swami Niranjanananda: In 1999, at Ganga Darshan, Munger, India, a four-month study was conducted into the effects of yoga practices on the personality development and cognitive abilities of children. The dimensions studied were memory, creativity, self-confidence, self-esteem and personal discipline. Seven hundred children between the ages of eleven and fifteen, from local schools, participated. Random selection was made of 350 children, who formed the experimental group and were trained in yoga practices by *Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal*, the Childrens' Yoga Fellowship. Another 350 children were placed in the control group, which did not undergo yoga training.

All the participants were pre-tested to determine a base score for memory, creativity, self-confidence and self-esteem. Post-testing was carried out after a four-month period. During the four months, the experimental group practised *surya namaskara*, salute to the sun, *shashank-bhujangasana*, striking cobra pose, *sarvangasana*, shoulder stand pose, *bhramari pranayama*, humming bee breath, *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing and *trataka*, fixed gazing. Their home practice was monitored regularly and they practised as a group at Ganga Darshan on alternate Sundays.

The overall results of the study indicate that the experimental group, which practised yoga, showed a more positive increase on all dimensions than the control group, which did not practise yoga.

On two types of memory tests, one measuring concentration, delayed recall, immediate recall and retention of dissimilar pairs, and another measuring mental balance, visual retention, remote memory and recognition, the yoga group showed greater improvement. On measures of creativity, they showed a substantial gain in fluency and flexibility.

On the self-confidence and self-esteem questionnaires, where the children estimated their intelligence, emotional balance, character, social skills and attractiveness, the yoga trained group showed a greater range of change. They also showed a remarkable change in general discipline as assessed by their parents.

This study has given us hope that if yoga is applied systematically, and the development of a child's personality can be assessed properly, the conclusion will be reached that yoga is a must for harmonious and integrated growth.

How can yoga be incorporated into school time to help students concentrate?

Swami Niranjanananda: A yoga syllabus has been developed that can be taught in primary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges. One posture and one breathing technique are practised by children at the beginning of every class. The asana is *tadasana*, the palm tree pose, and the pranayama is nadi shodhana, alternate nostril breathing. These two practices do not take much time. The students can stand beside their desk and practise *tadasana*. Asanas, especially the simplest ones involving traction, stretching, lateral stretch, and twisting, help to relieve tensions and blockages, allowing proper circulation of blood and energy throughout the body.

The mental attention is focused through the practice of alternate nostril breathing, a simple technique in which the children are asked to visualize the flow of the breath in and out at the time of inhalation and exhalation, with retention in between. It has been observed that as a result of these practices, children become free of the physical and psychological stresses that are accumulated unconsciously as they grow up.

What is the most effective practice for the development of concentration and memory?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Trataka* is the most effective practice for developing concentration. During exam time, practise *trataka* for five minutes before going to sleep and before

beginning studies. After a couple of days practice, one memorizes and retains whatever is read more easily. This practice develops mental concentration. It is most important for success in studies.

How can hatha yoga help prevent memory loss due to ageing?

Swami Niranjanananda: Research has found that every twenty years there is loss of memory. Why? Because the dead brain cells actually block the electrical impulses which go from one centre of the brain to another, so there is no clear route for this transmission to take place. When there is diminished transmission, it is experienced physically as loss of memory.

The researchers also discovered something else. If the pawanmuktasana series is practised continuously for six months, it helps to eliminate dead cells from the body. It is, therefore, a scientific conclusion that if one practises the techniques of pawanmuktasana regularly for six months at the age of forty and at the age of sixty, this twenty year cycle of change is affected and one's memory will remain as fresh as ever due to the process of descaling, removal of the blockages.

HATHA YOGA PRACTICES AND THE BRAIN

How does regulating the breath help mental and physical health?

Swami Niranjanananda: Respiration controls fluctuating moods, which are subtle behaviours of the mind. The neuronal memory of the brain influences the projection of moods. However, the neurons fire more rhythmically and the electrical interactions between the different brain centres become more regulated when one breathes slowly and deeply in a systematic and coordinated manner. The wild fluctuations of the brain waves are streamlined and there is a balance between the two hemispheres of the brain. This is seen on the EEG as emissions of longer alpha waves and reduction of beta waves. The alpha waves bring harmony to the brain as well as the

coronary, respiratory and circulatory systems. People suffering from high blood pressure are benefited by influencing the alpha wave behaviour of the brain.

What effect does jala neti have on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: Jala neti stimulates the various nerve endings in the nose, improving the sense of smell and the overall health of the individual. A balance is brought about between the right and left nostrils and the corresponding left and right brain hemispheres, inducing a state of harmony and balance throughout the body and mind. Most importantly, however, neti helps to awaken ajna chakra.



Jala neti

Why does kapalbhati have an energizing effect on the brain?

Swami Satyananda: Normal breathing is characterized by active contraction of only the inspiratory muscles, such as the diaphragm and the external intercostals; expiration occurs passively on the cessation of this contraction of the internal intercostals. Kapalbhati reverses this process: exhalation is active and inhalation is passive. This induces a reversal in the flow of the nerve impulses to and from the brain, bringing about stimulation and awakening of the brain centres. This is one reason for the brain-stimulating effect of kapalbhati, at least on a physiological basis. Generally, the expiratory muscles only come into action when there is obstruction to respiration, or when there is a great need of extra oxygen in the system.

What effect does kapalbhati have on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: The Sanskrit word *kapal* means 'cranium' or 'forehead' and *bhati* means 'light' or 'splendour', and also 'perception' or 'knowledge'. Hence, kapalbhati is the practice that brings a state of light or clarity to the frontal region of the brain. This pranayama invigorates the entire brain and the centres responsible for subtle perception and insight. It is also a cleansing practice and is therefore listed among the shatkarmas. Another term for this practice is *kapalshodhana*, the word *shodhana*, meaning, 'to purify'.

In normal breathing inhalation is active and exhalation passive. Kapalbhati reverses this procedure – exhalation is a forced, active process, while inhalation remains the same restful process. Kapalbhati further reverses the natural process by compressing the lungs below basal resting volume, whereas normal breathing expands and contracts the lungs, using an active process on inhalation and a passive process on exhalation. The brain centres which control normal breathing function are trained to become more versatile through the practice of these techniques.

From the point of view of the pancha pranas, the role of prana (the active inhalation) and apana (the passive exhalation) are reversed, reducing samana, which on the mental level means a reduction in the activity of *vrittis*, or mental oscillations. This can be experienced during kapalbhati. At the same time the powerful upward flow created by the whole breathing attitude stimulates udana in the head and neck, which is in keeping with the meaning of the term 'kapalbhati'.

How does trataka affect the brain?

Swami Satyananda: Trataka is a very important practice and a direct method of influencing the brain. The eye is actually an extension of the brain and the optic nerve is one of the twelve cranial nerves that emerge from the brain, not the spinal cord; therefore, when the optic system is engaged the brain is influenced.

The yogis discovered that making the eyes steady by gazing at a point either at the eyebrow centre, the nose tip, or a point outside of the body, immediately and beneficially affects the brain, and this has a reciprocal effect on the eye movements, the retina and the whole visual apparatus.

What effect does padmasana have on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: Padmasana, the lotus pose, is helpful in achieving physical and mental stability and peace. This is not simply a belief, but a physiological fact. It has been shown that during such asanas, sensations emanating from the lower spinal column through a group of nadis enter the brain, calming the nervous system. The experience of mental peace subsequently enhances physical health.

In padmasana, pressure is exerted on the lower vertebral column, resulting in relaxation of the nervous system. The breathing becomes slow, muscular tension is reduced and the blood pressure is lowered. Physical stability induces mental stability. Due to the positioning of the feet and the pressure exerted on the thighs, the circulation of blood to the lower limbs is reduced and the blood flow to the abdomen is increased, activating the digestive fire and increasing the appetite.

Ida and pingala are the two main nadis located along the vertebral column. Their influence spreads to every part of the body. These nadis have a relationship with the nerves carrying sensory information to the brain, providing knowledge and enabling awareness to arise. While in padmasana, this process of receiving and acting on sensory input is subdued. Physiologically, this means that reduced stimulation takes place and there is a state of calmness. During this process, beta, alpha and theta waves are generated. Padmasana also facilitates the experience of meditation by directing the flow of prana from mooladhara to sahasrara.

What effect does pranayama have on the brain?

Swami Satyananda: Pranayama is an important branch of hatha yoga. In the West it is usually translated as ‘breathing

exercise' or 'breath control' but *pranayama* is more than this; it is a system for training the different centres in the brain.

There are two types of breathing, voluntary breathing and involuntary breathing. Automatic or involuntary breathing happens twenty-four hours a day and is regulated by the inferior brain. The moment voluntary breathing is started, the frontal brain, the cortex, is involved, activating the higher brain centres.

Pranayama is a form of voluntary breathing. For example, nadi shodhana pranayama with internal breath retention: breathing in the left nostril, holding for a period of time, breathing out the right nostril, then in the right nostril, holding for a period of time, then breathing out through the left nostril. Scientific studies have observed that when one breathes in the left nostril, activity starts in the right hemisphere of the brain, and when one breathes in the right nostril, activity begins to take place in the left hemisphere of the brain. When the breath is held, both hemispheres of the brain become operative at the same time.

It has also been observed that the breath which enters the left nostril has a slightly lower temperature than the breath which enters the right. This is because the left nostril is related to ida nadi, the flow of mental energy, while the right nostril is related to pingala nadi, the flow of vital energy.

It has been found that the practice of pranayama results in a synchronous flow of alpha, delta and theta waves, thus harmonizing the activity of the brain. In scientific experiments, the correlation between heart activity, brain-waves and physiological arousal or tension in the body has been measured. The tension recorded in the body during beta brain wave activity changes when alpha, theta or delta waves occur. During alpha wave activity both physical tension and blood pressure are reduced.

Therefore, in relation to tension or hypertension, one should definitely know how to manage, control or train the brain to produce alpha waves. However, in order to control the brain, a method to train the mind is required. The

brain, which is the seat for the mind, can be controlled by systematically practising pranayama.

Which pranayamas are most important for daily practice?

Swami Niranjanananda: Two pranayamas must be practised: nadi shodhana and bhramari. Nadi shodhana balances the two brain hemispheres and removes nervous tensions. Bhramari regulates the functions of the endocrine system. When the functions of the glandular system are regulated and the brain is charged with oxygen and prana shakti and its two hemispheres are working in coordination, then the efficiency of the brain and mind increases manifold.

What is a simple practice to help people who are busy and feel rushed?

Swami Niranjanananda: Bhramari pranayama has a soothing effect on the nerves, especially for those people who are physically and mentally in a rush. It has been found that bhramari stimulates alpha brain waves. This can easily be experienced when one comes home from work. After three or four rounds of bhramari a state of deep relaxation, awareness and alertness is felt, as the sound vibrations emitted during this practice, and the concentration in the centre of the head where the sound is being felt, help to tranquilize and relax the agitated state of the brain by inducing alpha brain waves and relaxing the nervous agitation.

Bhramari, combined with psychic alternate nostril breathing, should be practised daily to induce mental calm. This can be practised for two, three, four, five or ten minutes, whatever time is comfortable and convenient. It induces a state of deep physiological and psychological relaxation.

What are the mental and spiritual effects of nadi shodhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: Nadi shodhana activates the frontal brain and ajna chakra, thereby inducing tranquillity, clarity of thought and concentration. It also helps remove depressive tendencies. At the spiritual level, the practice

of nadi shodhana prepares one to enter higher meditative states.

What is the effect of moolabandha on the brain?

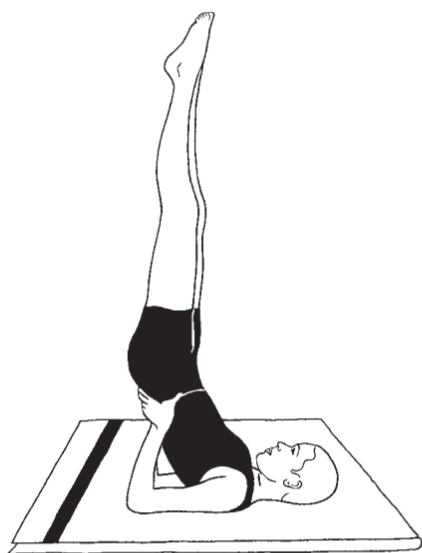
Swami Niranjanananda: Several nadis emanate from the lower spine. Many nadis terminate there, while others rise up to the brain. *Mooladhara*, as the base chakra, is very sensitive. When the contraction of moolabandha is maintained, creating an unfamiliar internal sensation, the nadis related to the autonomic nervous system are stimulated. The effect of this stimulation is reflected in the brain via its connection with the spine.

Mooladhara chakra is said to be located just below the spinal column. It follows that there is a related centre in the brain. It is this centre which is awakened as a result of vibrations generated at mooladhara by the practice of moolabandha. The sensation travels through the nadis up to the brain and awakens that sleeping region of the brain associated with mooladhara, as well as having a direct influence on the mooladhara region.

What is the effect of vipareeta karani mudra on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: The inverted posture sustained in this mudra is used to reverse the downward and outward movement of energy and redirect it back to the brain. When this happens, the whole being is revitalized and awareness expands. As the practice is perfected, the flow of prana in ida and pingala nadis becomes balanced. This state manifests as an equal flow of breath in the nostrils. The balancing effect of the practice also helps prevent disease developing on both the physical and mental planes.

Vipareeta karani asana, the half-shoulder stand, gives a gentle inversion without hard compression of the neck as in *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand. Physiologically, there is a greater flow of blood to the cerebral capillaries and blood vessels which helps to activate the brain. Therefore,



Vipareeta karani asana

it is believed that the posture gives a fresh charge to the brain.

When vipareeta karani asana is used as a mudra, the pranic dimension is augmented. First, the inverted posture reverses the flow of prana. Then, continually rotating the awareness and breath between the chakras takes the practice from being just an asana to being a mudra, in which there is both increased awareness of, and redirection of the prana.

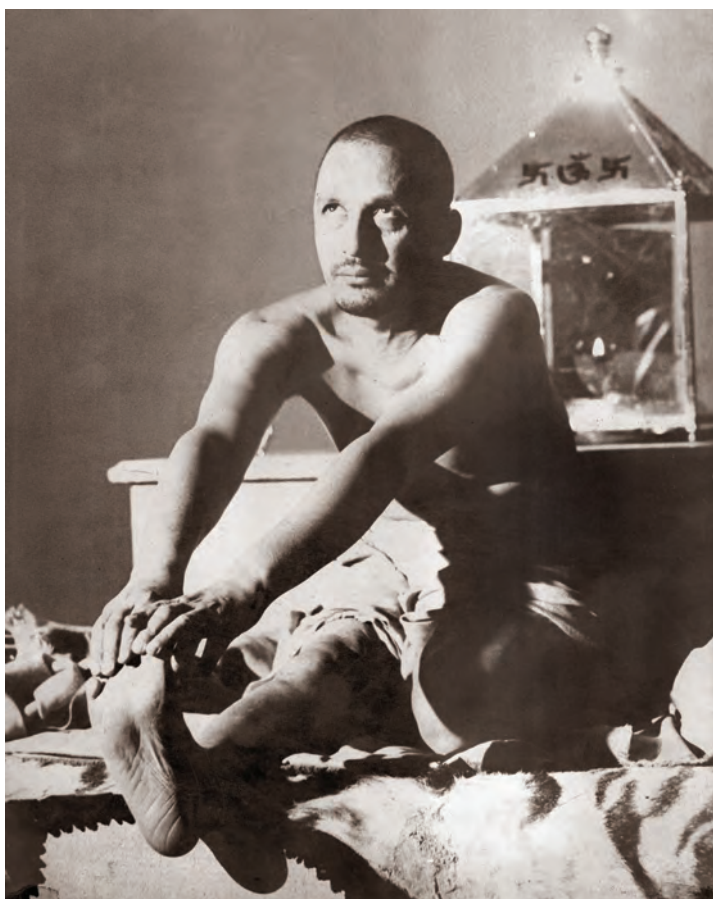
With the rotation of awareness, the concentration and mental faculties are directed to a particular psychic pathway in one's being. As one's awareness evolves, the actual movement can be felt at various levels.

What is the effect of maha mudra on the brain?

Swami Niranjanananda: With the practice of maha mudra, the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are balanced. Peace and tranquillity are established in the sensory and motor nerves connecting the senses, body and mind. Sensory experiences are reduced, thereby reducing excitement and calming the activity in the brain. Slowly the brain waves become peaceful, inducing spontaneous meditation. This mudra stimulates the energy circuit linking mooladhara with ajna chakra. The whole system is charged with prana, which intensifies awareness.

From a practical point of view, maha mudra can be practised prior to meditation to reduce restlessness in chitta, making it calm and peaceful, and making the mind

one-pointed. This practice brings introversion to the mind. When shambhavi mudra is performed, restlessness of the mind quickly subsides. When the eyes are closed, the mind becomes introverted. The number and speed of the thoughts and feelings are reduced. After practising for some time, the mind attains *shoonya avastha*, a vacuum state. In this one-pointed or focused state, there are no thoughts or feelings. With the removal of energy blockages, mental turmoil quickly vanishes.



3

Mind Management and Personality

MENTAL HARMONY

How do the mental and physical states affect the prana?

Swami Sivananda: When the mind is agitated, then this body also is agitated. Wherever the body goes, the mind follows. When both the body and mind are agitated, the prana flows in a wrong direction. Instead of pervading the whole body steadily and equally, it will vibrate at an unequal rate. Then food is not digested properly. Diseases originate. If the primary cause is removed, then all diseases will disappear.

What is the hatha yoga method for controlling the mind?

Swami Sivananda: To bring about control of mind, two things are essential: *prana nirodha*, control of prana and *sanga tyaga*, renunciation of *sanga* or association. By the latter is meant dissociation, not from the world, but only from the longing after or the attraction towards the objects of the world.

Pranayama, or control of the breath, checks the velocity of the mind and reduces the quantity of thinking. It removes dross in the form of *rajas* and *tamas* from the mind.

For control of the mind, *kumbhaka*, retention of breath, is indispensable. It has to be practised daily. Inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath must be practised regularly and rhythmically. Then the mind will become one-

pointed. The period of kumbhaka will increase by systematic practise, with regulated diet and proper dietetic discipline – light, nutritious, sattwic food. This is the hatha yoga method. The practice of kumbhaka must be done under the guidance of a guru who is a developed yogi.

What comes first, control of the mind or control of prana?

Swami Sivananda: Mind, prana and *veerya*, semen, come under one *sambandha*, connection. If any one of these three can be controlled, the other two are automatically controlled. Hatha yogis try to control the prana. Raja yogis try to control the mind. Jnana yogis start their sadhana with buddhi and will.

What methods does yoga recommend to still the mind?

Swami Satyananda: The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali say that yoga means controlling the impulses of the mind. The hatha yoga books say that yoga is the creation of a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Some yogis start by controlling the pranas – they are the hatha yogis. Others start with the mind – they are raja yogis.

The system of raja yoga, which is a more advanced yoga, advocates direct control of the forces of the mind. Raja yoga says control the mind and thereby the pranas are controlled. Hatha yoga says control the prana and thereby the mind is stilled. Both create a balance between the two forces of ida and pingala. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:2) it says:

*Chale vaate chalam chittam nishchale nishchalam bhavet;
Yogee sthaanutvamaapnoti tato vaayum nirodhayet.*

When prana moves, chitta (the mental force) moves. When prana is without movement, chitta is without movement. By this steadiness of prana the yogi attains steadiness and should therefore restrain the vayu (pranic air).

The science of yoga works from both ends. The practices of hatha yoga improve the physical health and this influence is transferred to the mental body. The practices of raja yoga

improve the mind and this influence is transferred to the physical body.

Why does spiritual life depend on harmonizing ida and pingala nadis?

Swami Niranjanananda: The concept of *Satyananda Yoga* is defined in the logo – a red circle and a blue circle. Red represents *pingala*, the dynamic sun, vitality and energy, and blue represents *ida*, the passive moon, tranquillity and peace; together they represent the balance between body and mind.

When the body is disturbed, the mind becomes dissipated and is unable to concentrate or meditate. Only when the body and mind are in harmony can spiritual experiences manifest.

Why is hatha yoga recommended as a system for creating mental harmony?

Swami Satyananda: It is said that when the mind is restless, the prana becomes restless. In the same way, if the mind is agitated, the pranas become disturbed; therefore, to control the mind and the prana, the same truth can be used. Those who have strong willpower can control the prana by controlling their mind but those who have no willpower and whose minds are weak and distracted, should control the prana first and thereby bring the mind under control.

Most people find it very difficult to control the mind. Any of the raja yoga techniques may be practised, but for many, it is still not possible to control the mind. When control of the mind is forced, the result may be a headache, heaviness, depression and lethargy. Often people try very hard to concentrate and after this effort a lot of anger is felt. Therefore, one has to find out how to handle the mind and how to handle the prana.

One point must be remembered – that control of the mind and control of prana are not separate, but go hand in hand. Each person has to find out which one he can

control more easily. When the mind and prana both come under control, then the awakening of kundalini begins and samadhi expresses itself. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:24):

*Dugdhaambuvatsammilitaavubhau tau tulyakriyau maanas-
amaarutau hi;*

*Yato maruttatra mana pravrittiryato manashtatra marut-
pravrittih.*

Mind and prana are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is prana.

The mind is difficult to control as it is such a subtle substance, and to control the mind there must be an efficient controlling power. Therefore, start with prana, as pranas are grosser than the mind. Prana can be comprehended, prana can be handled, but one cannot handle the mind.

The mind is handling the mind and therefore one cannot depend on it, as the mind which is handling the mind does not cooperate with the person whose mind it is. With prana, however, it is not like that – if the pranas are not ready to cooperate, they can always be manipulated.

What mental qualities are needed for success in hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: Sage Gheranda says that it is essential to possess certain mental qualities for the practice of hatha yoga, and to acquire them specific *sadhanas*, practices, are advised.

One of these qualities is *dridhata*, meaning ‘firm’ or ‘unshaken’. Some people understand this to mean power or energy and others consider it to mean mental force. The purpose for which it has been used here is not only physical, but mental, intellectual and emotional as well. Consider the attempts made during practice sessions to make the body strong and steady, the efforts made to bring clarity

to the thinking process. With firmness and the power of one's resolve one attempts to make life complete. In the same manner, Sage Gheranda says that it is important for a person to achieve the quality of firmness in order to purify the self, to keep on practising patiently until the result shows steadiness. Here, dridhata could mean moving with a *sankalpa*, adopting a resolution and remaining firm in it.

Another quality he mentions is *sthairyam*, steadiness. In his *Yoga Sutras* (2:46) Sage Patanjali refers to steadiness pertaining to the body: *sthirasukhamaasanam*, which means a steady, comfortable posture. During the practice of asana a person should remain steady. There should be no difficulty, tension or pain. Asanas should be performed in a relaxed manner. The same objective is given in *Gheranda Samhita*. It is essential to achieve physical steadiness as if the body is restless, it will not allow the mind to be one-pointed. Steadiness is seen in the form of a quality or need.

Yet another mental quality needed is *dhairyam*, patience. It means one remains unaffected by situations, does not lose patience, does not become distressed, does not lose tolerance.

The sadhanas for attaining these qualities are given in *Gheranda Samhita* (1:10–11):

*Shatkarmanaa shodhanam cha aasanena bhaveddridham;
Mudrayaa sthirataa chaiva pratyahaarena dheerataa.*

*Praanaayaamaallaaghavam cha dhyaanaatpratyakshamaat-
manah;*

Samaadhinaa nirliptam cha muktireva na samshayah.

Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara patience is achieved. (10)

Through pranayama agility or lightness is achieved, through meditation self-realization and through samadhi non-involvement or detachment, and undoubtedly liberation, are achieved. (11)

How does the hatha yoga lifestyle liberate the mind?

Swami Satyananda: In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:14) it says:

*Evamvidhe mathe sthitvaa sarvachintaavivarjitah;
Guroopadishtamaargena yogameva samabhyaset.*

In this manner, dwelling in the hermitage, being devoid of all thought (excess mentation), yoga should be practised in the way instructed by the guru.

‘Dwelling in the hermitage, being devoid of all thought’, means that by living in a place of spiritual vibrations the mind is free from unnecessary thoughts cultivated by society and the modern lifestyle. Under normal conditions the mind can never be thoughtless. Yogi Swatmarama is actually saying that the mind should be devoid of all thoughts that are irrelevant to spiritual life. Anxieties and worries caused by family and business should be absent during sadhana, as such disturbances affect one’s ability to concentrate. It is a natural tendency of the mind to dwell on past events and to contemplate the future, but this tendency must be controlled. The mind must be concentrated on the practice at hand and it must be kept in the present. There is a constant and habitual mental chatter which has to be nullified, and for this the practice of antar mouna, inner silence, is very useful.

An undisciplined mind is like a boisterous child, telling stories, continually distracting one from sadhana. If one is working in one’s study, children are not allowed to come in and create disturbance; the same principle should apply during sadhana practice. When the mind is assailed by unwanted and irrelevant thoughts, cultivate the habit of putting these thoughts aside until later, when the sadhana is finished. This does not mean that those who have no control of the mind are excluded from practising. Few people have real control of their mind. At man’s present stage of evolution the mind is weak. However, one has to start somewhere so it is better not to be concerned with mental activities; just do the practices and let the mind do what it likes. If one does

not try to constantly block and suppress the mind, it will automatically become obedient and concentrated through the process of sadhana.

In the days of Yogi Swatmarama, people may have been more sattwic by nature. Nowadays people tend to be either tamasic or rajasic. A *sattwic* person will have a quiet mind and his sadhana will progress unhindered by the *chitta vrittis* or 'mental modifications'. However, a *rajasic* person will have a very restless and oscillating mind, while a *tamasic* person will have a dull and lazy mind. Therefore, concessions must be made.

It should also be remembered that in Swatmarama's day, more people were able to devote their whole lives or a considerable portion of their lives to sadhana. It is not possible for people today to leave all their social commitments and simply practise sadhana all day. Few people can even manage to take a month off work to retreat into seclusion for intensive sadhana. This is highly recommended, but if impractical, further lifestyle modifications need to be made. For the average person it is enough to have a room set aside and to devote thirty minutes to sadhana each day.

Why is asana practice important for mental peace?

Swami Niranjanananda: We live in the dimension of the senses and body – that is our first experience of life. The second experience is the mind in the form of thoughts, emotions, ambitions and desires. The third experience is understanding the source of life, the spirit. As the body is the first experience, it becomes the basic tool for one's inner journey. Therefore, yoga begins with the performance and practice of physical postures. Remember that when the body is still and quiet, the mind also becomes still and quiet.

When physical postures are practised, one is not only working with the body, but also with the mind, the emotions and the spirit. The balance, wellbeing, health and vitality experienced in the body by performing physical postures

affects the mental dimension. In this way, even the most basic of the physical practices can help one to achieve internal balance and harmony. This process is further intensified when we combine physical postures with concentration, relaxation and meditation techniques. In this process, unity, harmony and integration of body, mind and spirit is experienced. Yoga comes full circle, which means union.

Why does hatha yoga begin with the body when the aim of yoga is God-realization?

Swami Niranjanananda: If the spiritual aim or the aim of yoga was only God-realization, the other practices would not need to be attempted. But every yoga exponent has emphasized that before one comes to the point of cultivating mental awareness and its faculties, one must manage, control and awaken the *prana shakti*, or forces of one's own body.

Manage your body, eradicate ill health, acquire good health through enhancement of prana and mind management. If the pranas are balanced, the body is healthy; if the mind is balanced, the mind is healthy. The mind, however, is never healthy. Just as the body suffers from asthma, diabetes or high blood pressure, the diseases of the mind are hatred, jealousy, greed, envy, anger, frustration and many more negativities.

In hatha yoga, the mind is trained to become one-pointed, the body is freed of its disorders and the pranas are awakened. When the mind becomes steady, that is the time to sow positive seeds in it.

How does hatha yoga help one manage the mind?

Swami Satyananda: The mind can be influenced through the practice of pranayama, mudra and bandha, as the practice of pranayama removes the imbalance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. When there is an imbalance or disharmony between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, the mind cannot be controlled.

Supposing one wants to concentrate on an object but is disturbed by external factors – the mind will not listen to its owner. After about ten or fifteen minutes of pranayama, there is a definite change, and the mind can be handled. The reason yoga practices are so powerful is due to their effect on the unconscious mind where they root out the real cause of problems.

How does trataka help one harness the power of the mind?

Swami Satyananda: Under the normal waking conditions of life, one is subjected to a continuous stream of sensory data from the outside world. Added to this are the multitudes of thoughts that arise from the subconscious mind, many in response to negative emotions and reactions to inner and external events. Due to this, the enormous power and potential of the mind is not used. Instead the mind operates at a low level relative to its fullest potential. Its energy is dissipated in all directions.

Trataka cuts off this continual bombardment of the mind by centring the attention or field of awareness at one point. In this way, one is able to become aware of the potential of the mind, for it spontaneously shows itself under these ideal conditions of concentration. Furthermore, trataka is a method of consolidating the power of the mind so that it can be directed towards some useful end, whether material, mental or spiritual.

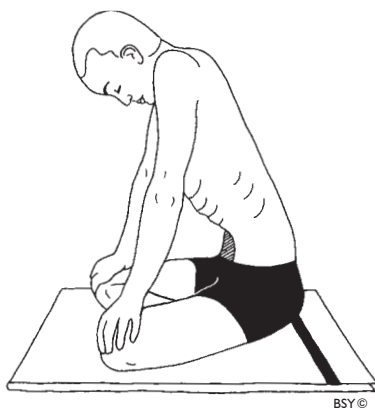
How do the bandhas help release mental blockages?

Swami Satyananda: *Bandhas* are not only locks, but also removers of locks or blockages which are in the form of physical and mental impurities. According to the scriptures there are *granthis* or psychic knots, located at mooladhara, anahata and ajna chakras. These three are called the *brahma*, *vishnu* and *rudra granthis*.

Granthis represent blockages in one's awareness at the different levels of consciousness; they are the psychic blocks and mental problems that obscure the true image of one's

essential nature, preventing the individual from soaring into the realms of meditation. The granthis are experienced as tension, anxieties, repressions and unresolved conflicts.

These blocks or knots have to be removed if one wants to know the experience of higher awareness. They can be removed either permanently or temporarily. Bandhas are one of the most effective means of untying these knots or blockages, at least for a short period of time. With repeated practice, each temporary removal helps to eventually eliminate the blocks permanently.



Maha Bandha

In yogic language, these granthis prevent the flow of prana into the main pranic passage of the body – the *sushumna nadi*. When they are released, prana immediately begins to flow through sushumna, which leads to increased receptivity of the mind and higher experiences.

HATHA YOGA AND THE PERSONALITY

How does yoga help one develop a strong and balanced personality?

Swami Satyananda: Yoga is a very comprehensive term which includes practices such as asanas, pranayamas and meditation, attitudes such as selfless activity, experiences such as mysticism and super consciousness, surrender unto the Supreme power, and the awakening of mental powers and capacities.

The cause of humanity's sufferings is tension, and every one is suffering either consciously or unconsciously. This suffering can come to an end but only when one is free from tensions. The way to make oneself free from tensions is

through yoga. Through asana and pranayama, sound health is maintained; through selfless service, the *vasanas*, deep-rooted impressions, are exhausted; through devotion and self-surrender, the emotions are stabilized; through mental control, mental efficiency is increased; through self-analysis and enquiry, the discriminative faculty is sharpened; and through meditation, consciousness is expanded. Thus all the layers of the personality are properly developed and one develops an integrated personality. This is the main task of yoga.

How do the hatha yoga practices affect the personality?

Swami Satyananda: Some people feel that the practices of hatha yoga are not necessary for spiritual seekers as they are only intended for improving the body. The physical sciences show that this is incorrect.

The yoga asanas and pranayamas in combination with the mudras, bandhas, and shatkarmas develop psychic awareness in the human being by manipulating the secretions of the glands within the system. These glands secrete hormones and their secretions flow into the bloodstream. Therefore, it is essential that they are kept functioning properly as they not only contribute to the development of the physical organism, but they also influence the personality structure in a subtle way, bringing about a change in one's behaviour and temperament.

The development of the pituitary gland creates a different way of thinking while secretions from the thyroid have their own influence on the emotional make-up of an individual. Certainly the presence or absence, the potency or impotency, of sex hormones has a special influence on the physical, mental and spiritual behaviour of the individual. Yoga thus enters the field of physiological psychology.

How do the hatha yoga practices help to evolve the personality?

Swami Niranjanananda: Asanas, pranayamas, concentration, relaxation and meditation, all channel, coordinate and

synchronize the activities of the brain and physiological systems. This influences the conscious mind to act and to expand its capacities. As awareness is developed by the practice of yoga, greater harmony is achieved between the different dimensions of the human personality.

Expansion of awareness takes place when one becomes simultaneously aware of the conscious and subconscious perceptions. As the actions, feelings, desires and sentiments are coordinated, the mind evolves; it begins to open other dimensions and unites the various phases of consciousness.

In every realm of personality, in every state of awareness, in every dimension of consciousness, there is movement towards total harmony, balance and coordination, leading to free expression of the personality and inner being.

What happens when the mental and dynamic energies are extremely out of balance?

Swami Satyananda: Yoga means communion. Union between the sun and the moon is hatha yoga. That is the literal meaning. What is the sun and what is the moon? According to yoga the right nostril is sun, and the left nostril is moon. They are associated with the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The sympathetic is sun and parasympathetic is moon. The moon rules the mind, the mental functions in one's personality, while the sun is the symbol of the vital functions of the personality; the moon is the symbol of the mental life, the mental man, the sun symbolizes the dynamic personality, one's vitality.

There must be a balance between the two. If the mind becomes more powerful, and the prana has become weak, there is such a lot of thinking and thinking and thinking, that the person cracks. On the other hand, if the prana is in abundance and there is no mental life, no reasoning, then everyone knows what happens: all kinds of disasters take place in society, beatings and killing and crime and such things. Why? Because when the prana is extremely powerful

one becomes overly dynamic without reason, without common sense.

There must be a balance between the two forces in man, the sun force and the moon force, the vital force and the mental force. This can be brought about by the practice of hatha yoga. This is its purpose.

How should hatha yoga be used by those who have a dynamic personality?

Swami Niranjanananda: For the intellectual type of mind and for the dynamic personality, the dynamic mind, for the person who is extrovert and associating with society and the world intensely, the path of self-discovery becomes the process of hatha yoga, of harnessing the energy manifestations in life. It needs to be understood that hatha yoga is not just the practice of postures or breathing techniques, but a process of harnessing the energies, the faculties of life. In this manner yogis try to understand and approach a process, a method, a system by which the different types of mind can be dealt with and inspired to attain higher experiences leading towards realization of one's true nature.

Why are physical practices important for balancing the personality?

Swami Niranjanananda: The inner personality does not exist without the support of the physical body. Therefore, in order to develop an understanding of the body as it relates to the inner personality, yogis evolved and developed the system of physical postures, asanas. In the present age, researchers and scientists have investigated the effects of asanas on the human body and mind, discovering that the greatest imbalances can be removed with the simplest practices. Physical imbalances and illnesses are managed with the practice of asana. Imbalances in the realm of vitality and energy are balanced with the breathing techniques of pranayama.

The mental dimension is possibly the most important aspect of yoga. The human mind has always been a mystery. People who study yoga say it is necessary to control the mind, but people who practise yoga say it is necessary to become friends with the mind. When the body and mind are in harmony, that state is recognized as spiritual experience.

What is the effect of diet on the mind and personality?

Swami Sivananda: Different foods produce different effects in different compartments of the brain. Spiced dishes, sour things, black gram, onions, garlic, tea, wine, fish, meat, mustard oil, etc., excite passions and emotions and should, therefore, be avoided. They should particularly be avoided by a sadhaka. A *jignasu*, spiritual aspirant, should strictly give up meat, fish and alcoholic drinks as these make the mind coarse and produce excitement in the mind. Heavy food brings drowsiness and laziness. Tea should be given up. It destroys veerya. Sugar must be taken in moderation, or preferably given up altogether.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Why are asanas and pranayamas important for releasing mental tension?

Swami Satyananda: People think that asanas and pranayamas are just exercises, but they are not exercises, they should not be practised as exercises, and they should be practised with great care.

Scientific investigations carried out in different parts of the world, such as Russia, Poland, India, France and Germany, have proved that during the practice of asanas the whole endocrinal system is greatly influenced; as a result, toxins are eliminated and energy blocks are cleared. The practice of asanas and pranayamas first removes muscular tensions, then mental tensions. Mental tensions are the greatest tensions and they must be dealt with – over-thinking,

wrong thinking and vicious thinking, all of which occur in daily life, cause mental tensions.

How can yoga enable one to deal with demanding situations?

Swami Niranjanananda: If the practices of asana, pranayama, relaxation, yoga nidra and the two practices of concentration, trataka and ajapa japa, are incorporated into one's routine, the ability to manage each and every kind of stress in the world is possible. The ability to maintain health in the most adverse conditions can be developed. The strength to experience one's inner power in the most demanding situations the world can throw at you will arise. That is the application of yoga in one's life.

Why is attaining optimum health and relaxation so important in yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Generally, one of the two energies, physical or mental, is unbalanced in everyone. A person may say that he is healthy, but at some point in life he has to face anxiety and stress, frustration and tension, and physiological as well as psychological illness. When asana and pranayama are practised, the first job is to eliminate the blockages from the nadis, thereby ensuring that the body and mind attain a state of optimum health.

The experience of optimum health is a transcendental experience where one does not experience any limitations, where one does not experience any stressful situations, and where there is a free flow and full awakening of energy. With these effects in mind, many scientific experiments have been conducted to see how the practices of asana and pranayama influence the structure of the body and mind.

Yoga says that both physiological harmony and tension are felt by the mind. Conversely, mental relaxation and tension are felt in the body. When there is harmony, equilibrium and a feeling of optimum health in the body, one experiences it in the brain, and also in the mind. This

state eventually influences the dormant areas of the mind, awakening the potential that is inherent within them. This is the concept of total health.

When talking of health, yoga does not mean the health of the body's muscular system. When talking of health, yoga does not mean the alleviation of physiological problems. When talking about health, yoga means harmony, balance and equilibrium at each and every level of the personality, in each and every dimension of the personality.

When this experience is attained, the state of true and complete relaxation is achieved. The sensory perceptions become introverted. In this state of relaxation, awareness of the worldly sense objects is also introverted. Awareness has been of external experiences but not of internal experiences, and the aim of yoga is to make one aware of internal experiences. It is to make one aware of both realities, external and internal, which in turn helps one to transcend or understand one's own capacities, limitations and potentials. Therefore, yoga is considered to be a science of the body, mind and spirit; it is a science for the total health of the whole being.

How can yoga help calm a restless mind?

Swami Satyananda: Generally, restlessness is due to excessive thinking and desiring, and it indicates that the mind is not under control. In this physical body there are two forms of energy. One is known as mental energy and the other is vital or pranic energy. When one feels restless, it means the mental energy is high and the pranic energy is low; there is an imbalance, the sense organs are very active and the motor organs are less active. In hatha yoga language, we call this an imbalance between *ida* and *pingala nadis*, or in modern scientific terms, an imbalance between the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems.

There are two ways to approach the problem. Either check the quantum of mental energy or increase the quantum of pranic energy. The purpose of hatha yoga,

raja yoga, or in fact, any form of yoga, is to create this harmonious situation. In order to check excess mental energy, mantra repetition is the best practice. Alternatively, hatha yoga says, try to increase the level of prana in the body.

Additionally, there are certain hormonal secretions which contribute to restlessness. The most disturbing hormones are adrenaline and testosterone. If the outflow of these hormones can be controlled, the physiological causes leading to restlessness can be overcome. By regularly practising asana, pranayama and meditation, hormonal production is controlled, mental and pranic energies are harmonized, and problems such as restlessness do not occur.

What yoga practices help to settle a restless mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: For immediate relief from the restless mind, the pranayama practices are extremely beneficial. It is not necessary to sit down in the market place and start closing the nose to perform nadi shodhana whenever one feels disturbed. Practise psychic pranayama instead. Mentally imagine, “I am breathing in through the left nostril, I am breathing out through the right nostril,” etc. The eyes do not even need to be closed. In order to do bhramari, do not plug the ears, just start humming as if humming a tune – *hmmmm*.

This will immediately help to break the state of restlessness and anxiety. If the condition persists, then of course, on returning home, do other practices like yoga nidra, antar mouna and mantra meditation to become centred.

How can one deal with anxiety?

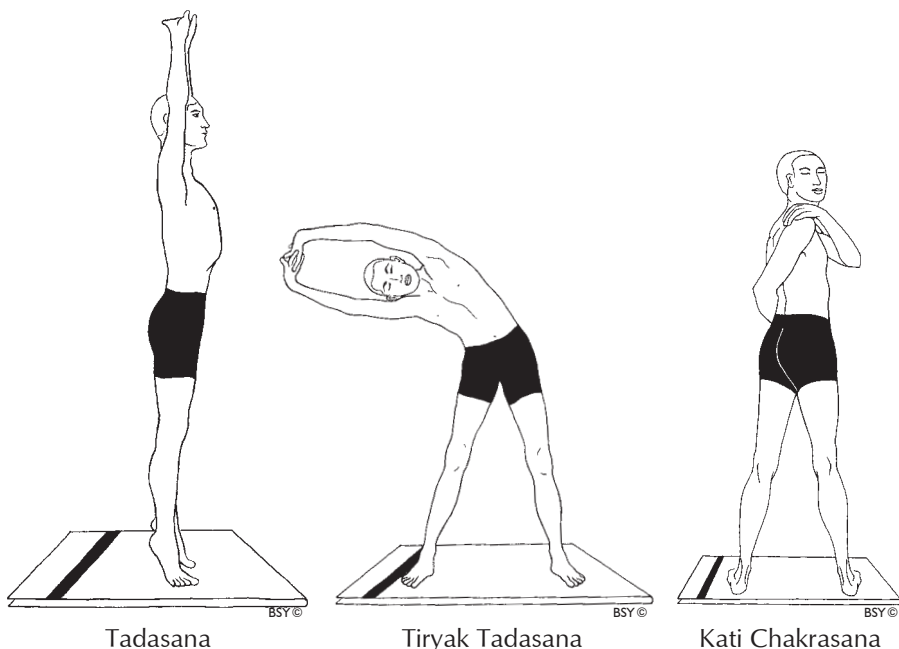
Swami Niranjanananda: Anxiety and tension or stress can be experienced on various levels at the same time. The four areas where anxiety and stress are usually experienced are muscular, nervous, cerebral and emotional. Initially the level on which the anxiety is being experienced needs to be

identified. The approach will depend on which it is. If one feels anxiety on all levels, a different approach is required.

If the entire body and emotions feel affected by stressful conditions, some simple postures, pranayamas and relaxation should be practised. Postures such as *tadasana*, the palm tree pose, *tiryak tadasana*, the swaying palm tree pose, *kati chakrasana*, the waist rotating pose, and *parwanmuktasana*, the energy releasing poses, are recommended. Pranayamas such as *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing, and *bhramari*, the humming bee breath, and then some yoga nidra, relaxation, should also be done.

Bear in mind that one is not going to be rid of anxiety in one session. It takes continued effort to release blocked energies and to harmonize the energies that are in conflict with each other, so the practices must be continued until a comfortable state of being is reached.

For emotional anxiety, two practices are helpful. One is *trataka*, gazing at a candle flame, and the other is *antar*



mouna, inner silence. Do these sequentially: first practise *trataka*, then *antar mouna*.

Which pranayama practices are best for stress management?

Swami Niranjanananda: The tranquilizing pranayama practices are designed to relax the body and mind, while simultaneously increasing the pranic capacity and conscious awareness. These pranayamas stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system and draw the awareness within. Some bring about greater psychic sensitivity, while others cool the system. These practices should be avoided by persons who are excessively introverted, oversensitive or psychically unbalanced, as they may exacerbate these conditions.

Tension is created when practising the bandhas – how can this help relieve stress?

Swami Niranjanananda: Bandhas are locks and there are three areas of the body which get blocked or locked when under stress or tension. Many people notice that when they are under pressure the stomach becomes tight, or the perineum becomes tight, or the neck becomes tight. Tension headaches can result from tightening of the neck muscles.

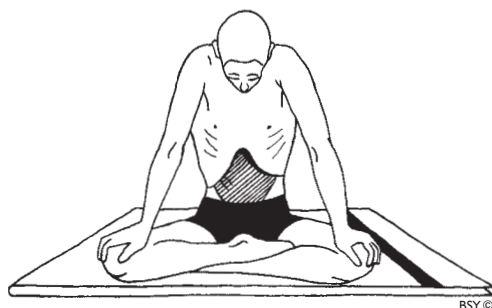
This is unconscious tensing, while bandhas are conscious tensing. Unconscious tensing creates stress and conscious tensing releases stress, as the process and movement are being controlled. This means tension is not being created, it is being controlled and guided.

These three areas reflect the stresses of the body. There is another important factor in relation to this, an example of which is seen in soldiers. Soldiers tend to be very tight in the stomach region, which means that *manipura* is activated and tensed – as they have a lot of aggression and are very dynamic as this whole area is in a state of fight or flight.

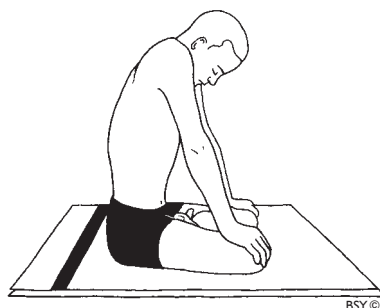
Similarly, when contraction occurs in the perineal region, there is fear and insecurity, as *mooladhara* and *swadisthana* chakras have been tightened. Yet when *mooladhara*

and swadisthana are consciously blocked at the time of practising the perineal lock, *moola bandha*, psychological and mental tensions and stresses can be released.

For manipura, *uddiyana bandha*, contraction of the abdomen, is done so that the energy of manipura can be released. Similarly, when the neck is tense and tight at the end of an intense day of work, one moves the neck up and down to release the pressure. For the neck therefore, yogis have prescribed *jalandhara bandha*, the chin lock.



Uddiyana bandha



Jalandhara Bandha

How can yoga help in combating mental stress in the army?

Swami Niranjanananda: Mental stress is caused by the work environment, the family environment and the social environment. In 1993, the late General Joshi, Chief of the Armed Forces in India, approached the Bihar School of Yoga to train army personnel, especially in the Siachen and Bikaner areas which have extreme climatic variations of heat and cold.

Two swamis conducted specific training programs in Leh and in base camps in the Siachen and Bikaner areas. While conducting these programs they also underwent similar exertions to the army personnel in order to experience for themselves what happens, how to cope with it and how to teach the soldiers to cope with it. The results were incredible, especially in the Siachen base camp. The soldiers face enormous difficulties in those harsh conditions, at

altitudes of up to 6,000 metres, surrounded by ice and snow, their worst enemies are acute isolation and deprivation of communication. They suffer a great deal from mental and emotional stress as they live without receiving any communication from their families for two years. At that time what is their mental condition and state of mind?

In the Siachen base camp we experimented with five practices to help the soldiers manage their physical, mental and emotional stress: a group of asanas known as the pawanmuktasana series, pranayama, trataka, ajapa japa, and yoga nidra.

In normal conditions the concentration practice of trataka, fixation of the gaze on the tip of a candle flame, helps to improve concentration, one-pointed awareness, but in those extreme conditions, it also helped to stop dissipation of the emotions and thoughts and to reduce the level of fear, insecurity and anxiety. The practice of ajapa japa was also taught, repetition of a mantra with inhalation and exhalation. This practice was found to be a very efficient tool to manage psychological problems and disturbances which the armed forces face in harsh climatic conditions and total isolation.

The most important practice we taught the soldiers was yoga nidra, relaxation. If one can incorporate a component of relaxation into one's life, not sleep but relaxation, life will change drastically and dramatically. People have lost the ability to relax.

MOOD MANAGEMENT

How do the body and mind affect each other?

Swami Sivananda: The mind is intimately connected with the body. The mind acts upon the body and the body reacts upon the mind. The mind influences the body – a pure, healthy mind means a healthy body. Grief in the mind weakens the body. The body influences the mind in its turn. If the body is strong and healthy, the mind also becomes healthy and

strong. If the body is sick, the mind also becomes sick. A pain in the stomach causes depression in the mind.

The primary cause of diseases which afflict the body is bad thoughts. Whatever is held in the mind will be produced in the physical body. Any ill-feeling or bitterness towards another person at once affects the body and produces some kind of disease in the body. Intense passion, hatred, long-standing bitter jealousy, corroding anxiety, fits of hot temper actually destroy the cells of the body and induce diseases of the heart, liver, kidneys, spleen and stomach. Violent fits of hot temper do serious damage to the brain cells, throw poisonous chemical products into the blood, produce general shock and depression and suppress the secretion of gastric juice, bile and other digestive juices in the alimentary canal, drain away energy and vitality, induce premature old age and shorten life.

When the mind is agitated, then the body is also agitated. Wherever the body goes, the mind follows. When both the body and mind are agitated, the prana flows in the wrong direction. Instead of pervading the whole body steadily and equally, it will vibrate at an unequal rate, without rhythm.

How can anger be managed with hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Prana entwines the mind like a creeper. Pranayama leads to the control of mind. Pranayama will put a break on the impulse of speech. It will give you abundant energy to check anger.

Do asanas and pranayama also affect feelings and moods?

Swami Sivananda: When one is not practising yoga, the nervous system is slow, and as a result, there is a sort of depression. Additionally, the energy in the body usually remains blocked at one or more centres, as the nervous system is not activated.

When yoga asanas and pranayamas are practised, the various systems in the body, such as the respiratory, circulatory, cardiac and nervous systems, are properly activated. As a

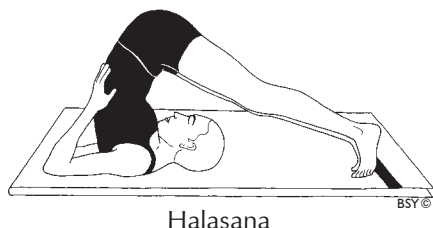
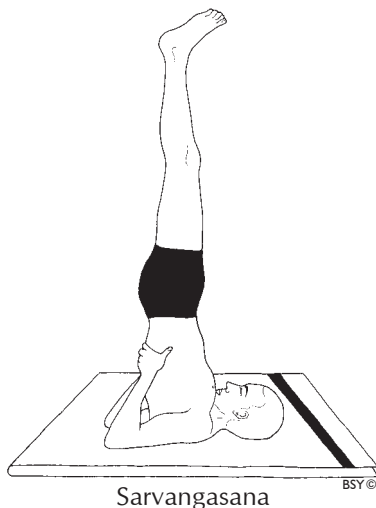
result of this, the feelings in the brain that had been blocked are released, and pranic energy is introduced into the higher centres of the brain, allowing one to feel light and relaxed.

How does the endocrine system effect human behaviour?

Swami Satyananda: Recent scientific research has brought a fundamental finding into the limelight: the effect of endocrine secretions on the human mind, human behaviour and human emotion. The endocrine glands are the pituitary gland, pineal, thyroid, thymus, pancreas, adrenals and the ovaries and testes.

Scientists have reached the conclusion that if one is angry by nature, there may be something wrong with the glands. If one thinks too much, it is possible that some glands are over functioning. Endocrine secretions have an effect on human action, human behaviour, and human thinking. If one is always angry, or too emotional, or if one thinks too much, or sleeps too much, or worries too much, or is too self-conscious, it may be due to some kind of fault in the endocrine system.

There are six or seven basic asanas that influence the endocrine secretions. For example, *siddhasana*, the adept's



pose, influences sex secretions, *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand pose, influences the thyroid glands, while *halasana*, the plough pose, influences pancreatic and adrenal secretions.

Why do yogis use the breath to harmonize the body and mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: The breath is the reflection of the state of mind. If one is agitated, the breathing is rapid; if one is angry, the breathing is short and shallow; if one is relaxed, the breathing is long and deep. The states of mind are reflected in how one breathes. Sometimes the breath may not even be noticeable, it is so gentle.

By watching a person's breath, one can know what kind of mood that person is in, whether it is an aggressive mood, a quiet mood, a depressive mood or a frustrated mood. All the symptoms of mental behaviour and mood can be observed in the way one breathes in and out. For this reason, yogis use the breath to regulate and harmonize the physical systems, like the nervous system. They use the breath to tranquilize the functions of the mind.

How can hatha yoga help control anger, jealousy and fear?

Swami Satyananda: Anger is one of the biggest barriers in life and jealousy is absolutely unnecessary and useless. Habitual anger means there is too much adrenalin in the system. The nervous system and glands react promptly to the various mental states.

One should try to never become involved with jealousy or anger, but if necessary the practice of *shashankasana*, the hare pose, will help. Shashankasana helps to control the adrenal



Shashankasana

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glands and calms the mind. Practising shashankasana daily soon brings about a total change in one's physiological behavior.

To overcome a fear complex, practise shashankasana and antar mouna, inner silence. If shashankasana is practised for half an hour daily, the secretion of adrenaline can be controlled and the fright and fear will gradually diminish. In antar mouna, let the fear come and simply witness it, observing the effects it has on the mind, body and emotions. After some time the cause of the fear will be realized, and it will be seen to be rooted in a forgotten childhood experience. If shashankasana, antar mouna and pranayama are practiced regularly, after some time the childhood experience will be relived in the mind and all fear will vanish like a miracle.

How can hatha yoga be used to reduce aggression?

Swami Satyananda: Aggression can be combated by the practice of the cooling breaths, *sheetali* and *seetkari* pranayamas, but first a thorough study should be made of one's personality. Aggression is part of one's nature that develops during the course of life and sometimes psychological disturbances can be caused by trying to arrest a natural aspect of the personality.

Although pranayama is suggested, one's nature should be used in constructive and creative work. A person with an aggressive nature can be very dynamic. He can use his personality to bring about great changes in society.

What is the effect of shambhavi mudra on the moods?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Shambhavi mudra*, gazing at the eyebrow centre, calms the mind, removing emotional stress and anger. Concentration, mental stability and the state of thoughtlessness are developed.

What is the effect of nasikagra drishti on the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Nasikagra drishti*, nosetip gazing, calms anger and disturbed states of mind. The powers of

concentration are developed. If performed with awareness for a long period, it helps to awaken mooladhara chakra and induce meditative states.

How can hatha yoga help people who are tired of life?

Swami Niranjanananda: In order to make the body and mind free from disease and disorders, purification is important. *Shodhanam*, which means purification, is listed in *Gheranda Samhita* as the first of the sadhanas necessary for a sadhaka.

Generally, people pursue physical pleasure or follow thought processes through which they seek to advance themselves. Due to the effort they put into it, they naturally come to expect success. When failure comes instead, disappointment follows. In normal life a person then feels tired, physically, mentally and emotionally, but a yogi does not feel tired. Here tiredness does not mean the way the body feels after physical labour. It means *virakti*, disinterest.

Many people say that they are tired of fighting with life. There is no interest in doing anything; the mind does not like anything, as if there is no desire left. Sometimes this state of tiredness is so deep that there is no interest in the family, eating, reading, writing and so on. Lack of interest is evident in every field of life. There is depression. However, there is no such lack of interest in the dictionary of yogis.

These deep feelings of exhaustion and disinterest are created when the past keeps revolving in the mind side by side with concern about the future. When the past is related with the future and not with the present, a state of *virakti*, indifference, disinterest, is created. A yogi remains unaffected by such physical and mental activities. When physical and mental purity are attained through hatha yoga, this affects the inner self, the *antahkarana*. *Ahamkara*, ego, *buddhi*, intellect, and *chitta*, memory, are the three main components of the *antahkarana*.

How do the shatkarmas purify the mind as well as the body?

Swami Niranjanananda: The first three shatkarmas, neti, dhauti and basti, free *annamaya kosha*, the food body or physical body, of its defects. The other three shatkarmas are kapalbhathi, nauli and trataka, which help contain the agitations of the mind and bring it to a point of focus. Trataka controls the dissipations of the mind. Kapalbhathi removes mental tensions. Nauli awakens the centre of pranas in the body, manipura chakra. Yoga begins with these practices.

What effect does trataka have on the mind and emotions?

Swami Niranjanananda: In normal life the concentration practice of trataka, fixing the gaze on the tip of a candle flame, helps to improve concentration and one-pointed awareness. In situations of extreme stress, it helps stop dissipation of the emotions and thoughts, and reduces levels of fear, insecurity and anxiety.

MENTAL HEALTH

How does yoga improve mental health?

Swami Satyananda: There are different branches of yoga. All these can help in one's individual and social life. Yoga is mental therapy. Asanas, pranayamas, ajapa japa, nada yoga and all other practices of yoga help rid the accumulated *samskaras*, impressions, from the mind. Once these *samskaras* go, one's neuroses, mental conflicts, complexes and frustrations also depart.

People identify themselves too much with the body and then fall victim to all sorts of psychological neuroses. Even when there is no earthly cause for neurosis, they create them – a fear complex, for example, or fear of death, fear of ill-health, fear of monetary losses, fear of this, fear of that, all these fears when there is not the slightest justification for them. All sorts of foreboding situations and worries are imagined without rhyme or reason.

If one wants to change the personality, if one wants to remove complexes, then yoga is the answer.

What role can yoga play in psychological rehabilitation?

Swami Satyananda: The word yoga has become an international word and there is no land, there is no country and there are no people who are not intimately interested in this great science which is known as the science of yoga. Some people have vague ideas about it and feel that the system of yoga is not meant for those who are interested in ordinary life, thinking it is only for those who want self-realization and certain religious experiences.

When I started expounding yoga all over the world I did not think that it would play such a vital role in the life of those who are civilized, who are normal, who are educated, who are cultured and have every means of living and enjoyment at their disposal, as people of western countries do. Today, however, psychological abnormalities and problems have crept in with the advancement of civilization, taking the form of tensions, nervous breakdowns and neuroses. There is a strong possibility of removing them with the practices and the science of yoga.

Many thousands of youths in advanced western nations are completely broken and damaged by the over use of drugs, and live with almost crippled or paralyzed brains. They are being rejuvenated and revitalized by the practices of yoga, even though the assistance of medical science is available to them. Furthermore, yoga programs given in mental asylums and prisons, as well as with spoilt children and with people who have under developed and retarded brains, have shown that the systematic practice of yoga can bring a revival in the entire personality.

Scientists have investigated the *asanas*, physical postures, and the *pranayamas*, breathing exercises, of hatha yoga, discovering that they not only influence the physical condition but also the psychosomatic, mental and vital conditions, which appear as psychological diseases.

Mental conditions such as restlessness, anxiety, neurosis, sleeplessness, worries and other psychosomatic disorders, though they are psychological, can be safely cured through the practice of asanas. The asanas influence the endocrinal glands such as the adrenal and thyroid glands, and by this mechanism they not only remove physical defects, but they also correct the imbalanced condition of the human mind.

Is yoga a treatment for mental and emotional disturbances?

Swami Satyananda: Mental sickness can never be cured by leading a life of only material prosperity. Just saying a few prayers in the morning does not cure mental sickness either.

Mental sickness is a terrible thing which must be understood. A few sensible individuals become aware of it in themselves, but many people live in ignorance, functioning from a deep basis of anxieties, worries, and fears but without recognizing it. People may say that yoga is not for them, but no one in the world is free from sickness. There is no one whose mind is not ill. The body is always being studied by scientists, trying to understand headaches, fevers, colds and coughs – but what about the diseases of the inner personality, which stem from the psychic desires that are unknown, but are reflected in day-to-day behaviour? This type of mental sickness is spreading through the world like an epidemic and it needs to be treated immediately.

Individual minds are part of the collective mind. Individual mental sickness and collective mental sickness can lead to disaster. When the body is ill, one is aware of it and takes care of it. When the mind is ill, one does not know it and therefore does not take care of it. The inner layers of one's mind, one's psyche, one's being, is beyond conception – we live only in a world of matter.

Yoga is a method by which a healthy atmosphere can be brought about in one's system. Many people do not think about mental illness, yet their thoughts, their behaviour, and their system of thinking and philosophy infect society!

The subconscious mind and the deeper layers of the subconscious are ultimately responsible for the expression of life. Therefore, it becomes necessary for every individual to be treated, and the treatment of mind or the treatment of the inner personality can take place with the practice of yoga. This includes treating emotional disorders that are born out of emotional maladjustment.

How does the hatha yoga practice of trataka purge the unconscious mind?

Swami Satyananda: An accumulation of archetypes collectively form the karma of an individual. It is on account of them that one's mind, emotions and personality are formed. If one suffers in life, it is on account of deep-rooted karma, or if one enjoys life, it is also on account of karma. How does one deal with one's karma?

Karma cannot be dealt with by a rational process such as psychoanalysis or psychiatric treatment; it has to be understood as a subtle force underlying each and every action or event that is encountered. It has been found that the practice of concentration on a symbol is effective in purging these archetypes from the unconscious mind. In yoga this practice of concentration is known as trataka, and it should be done prior to the practice of yoga nidra.

When practising trataka on a symbol, these particles or samskaras in the brain are stimulated. There are hundreds of symbols prescribed in yoga and tantra, out of which some are considered more powerful than others. For example, concentration on a yantra or mandala is extremely powerful, depending on the quality of the yantra or mandala one chooses. Trataka done on the kali yantra or mandala brings out repressions more quickly, often in the form of nightmarish experiences. Concentration on different yantras and mandalas bring out different quantities and qualities of repressed material. These repressions can be experienced in dreams, or in the state of meditation, and that means the whole thing is being flushed out. Therefore, side by side with

yoga nidra, concentration should be taught, according to the quality and resistance of the aspirant.

What is the yogic approach to removing tension?

Swami Satyananda: Tensions are physical, mental and emotional. Unbalanced hormonal secretions due to faulty living, faulty breathing and so on can cause tensions. They are not necessarily due to the psychological problems of society or the emotional maladjustment of the family. There can also be nervous disorders and other physiological problems.

Therefore, in yoga, asanas and pranayamas come first in order to get rid of muscular and physical tensions, to eliminate the toxins from the body and, at the same time, to balance the hormonal secretions. For instance, over and under secretion of the pituitary hormones, the sexual hormones, adrenalin, and thyroxin, all have a great influence on one's behaviour and thinking.

Can the mind be cleansed just as the body can be?

Swami Satyananda: There is a technique in hatha yoga called shankhaprakshalana which eliminates toxins from the stomach and cleans the whole alimentary canal. The stomach is completely cleaned and the body becomes light and free from tension.

Likewise, there is a mental shankhaprakshalana which frees the mind from unnecessary thoughts and provides mental equilibrium. Our minds are constipated with foul conceptions, tensions, old samskaras and many unfulfilled desires. As long as there are unnecessary worries and inhibitions the mind cannot relax.

When one cleans the physical body, salt water has to be drunk and then one must go to the toilet a number of times. This creates tiredness but afterwards one feels much better. In the same way, mental shankhaprakshalana is tiring in the beginning due to the tremendous amount of thoughts, but ultimately, when one is able to evacuate the mind of thoughts, real happiness can be enjoyed.

4

Hatha Yoga and Meditation

PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

What are the benefits of practising hatha yoga before meditation?

Swami Sivananda: When the body is purified, meditation is far better and far deeper, so a practitioner of yoga must start by purifying the physical elements of his body. The *shatkarmas*, six systems of purification of hatha yoga, can be learnt from any expert teacher. A realized guru is not needed for that, but the teacher should be experienced. When practising hatha yoga, start to develop concentration with the help of pranayama.

How does a hatha yogi develop the power of concentration?

Swami Sivananda: Pranayama or control of breath removes the veil of rajas and tamas that envelops sattwa. This purifies the nadis. It makes the mind firm and steady and thereby renders it fit for concentration. The dross of the mind is cleansed by pranayama, just as the dross of gold is removed by melting. A hatha yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through pranayama.

How does hatha yoga prepare one for the spiritual experiences that may occur during meditation?

Swami Sivananda: Sometimes the spiritual experiences that people have are difficult to handle, as the body and

organs, which are the base for these experiences, have not been harmonized. Many people who practise meditation, reach a point at which they begin to have experiences and don't know how to handle them. Sometimes fear creeps in; they are afraid that what they are undergoing is a psychotic experience and not transcendence. Therefore, they must come back to hatha yoga, as they are having these experiences without first balancing the two opposite poles of energy in the body.

People like to practise hatha yoga and they want to know more about it. Most people's questions are on hatha yoga: asanas, pranayama, mudra, bandha, and the six systems of purification. A satsang may be on meditation, but at the end there are only questions on pranayama, asanas and purification. From these questions, what people really need becomes clear.

How can hatha yoga lead to the state of meditation?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga is a great science which everyone can practise according to his own capacity. At least a few techniques can be practised each day. Shatkarmas, along with asanas and a few pranayamas are sufficient for most people.

With all due respect to meditation, it is necessary to practise these three preparatory limbs first. Then one may go further if necessary. If the preparation is perfect, there will be no need to learn meditation from anyone. One fine morning, while practising pranayamas, the mind will be lifted into a new realm of consciousness.

Why is hatha yoga practised before raja yoga meditation?

Swami Satyananda: In raja yoga, dharana, concentration, is the sixth step. The order is: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi. Sometimes people do not prepare for the sixth step. They hear others say, "concentration is very good, you must do it," so they jump immediately to the sixth step without preparing the

mind, the body, the philosophy and lifestyle. Concentration is not an abstract practice. When one concentrates, biochemical changes occur in the physical body. Scientists have shown that during any practice of yoga, and especially during the concentration practices, biochemical changes take place. Therefore, prior to concentration other practices such as pranayama and pratyahara are required as preparation. Before attempting to practise concentration, purify the body with the help of hatha yoga.

How does the dynamism of hatha yoga prepare one for the stillness of meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Perfect hatha yoga first: believing that the aspirant would have completed the practice of hatha yoga before coming to raja yoga, Sage Patanjali simply defined asana as a static pose in which the body is comfortable and still. In his *Yoga Sutras* (2:46) it is written:

Sthiram sukham aasanam.

Steady and comfortable should be the posture.

The steady postures which are used for introspection, introversion, sadhana and meditation are: *sukhasana*, easy pose, *padmasana*, lotus pose, *siddhasana*, accomplished pose, *vajrasana*, thunderbolt pose, and others. There are about twelve asanas used in meditation. These asanas also help to realign the flow of prana shakti in the body. The purpose of hatha yoga is to balance the imbalances which disturb the peace and ease of the body.



Siddhasana

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The next purpose of hatha yoga is to open the *nadis*, the channels or conductors of the pranic force. Clearing of the nadis happens through the practice of dynamic postures. It also happens with the practice of mudras. The blocks from the psychic centres are removed with the practice of bandhas. Only when hatha yoga has been perfected does yoga give instructions to move into the next dimension of yoga, which is raja yoga. Therefore, first perfect hatha yoga, then move into raja yoga. After the dynamic and involved activities of hatha yoga, the practices of raja yoga are static and induce a state of awareness, relaxation, concentration and meditation.

Can pranayama take one directly to the state of meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Pranayama is practised to bring the mind under control, and for this purpose the round is usually begun from the left nostril, which represents *ida nadi* or the mental energy. In contrast, the rotation of awareness in yoga nidra is begun from the right side to first subdue *pingala*, the vital energy and heat in the body.

By practising pranayama systematically for a few years, a gradual transformation is brought about in the structure of the nervous system. Ultimately, there comes a moment when one closes the eyes, goes in and achieves meditation.

How do asanas and pranayamas prepare one for meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Asanas prepare the body for meditation. They stimulate the glands, purify the liver, lungs and heart, supply blood to organs, loosen the muscles and joints, and give flexibility to the body. Pranayamas provide more *prana*, vital energy, and purify and vitalize the nervous system. The purpose of asanas and pranayamas is to balance the nerve impulses provided to the brain and mind by the senses, and to concentrate the pranic force within the body.

When the breath is under control, the heartbeat is rhythmic, the glands are functioning properly, and the

nervous system is coordinated, a meditation posture can be maintained properly. When there is sufficient prana distributed throughout the body, the mind automatically becomes calm and one-pointed. One is able to concentrate, the energies are balanced, the channels for the energy flow are open, and one is really ready to start meditation.

When this state of readiness is reached, both the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems have been stimulated. This means that a significantly increased blood supply reaches all parts of the body, particularly the brain, stimulating it beyond normal and resulting in greatly heightened awareness. At the same time, the heart rate falls, the breathing rate falls, and the digestive system slows down (which is why meditation should not be practised on a full stomach). All the automatic bodily functions reach a low ebb and the body goes into a state of complete relaxation – but the mind becomes more aware. When the mind becomes calm, aware, one-pointed and is able to concentrate without distraction, this is meditation.

Meditation occurs when the barriers of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious minds have been passed, and the superconscious mind is reached. Asanas and pranayamas are therefore as important as meditation itself. They are the keys by which the doors of the energy store are opened, and thus they are named the conductors of prana.

What are the benefits of practising asana and pranayama before meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: When one cooks vegetables a little bit of everything is put in: spices, salt, onion, oil and vegetables, all cooked up together, creating the desired flavour. If one ingredient is missed, or if there is too much of one ingredient, that changes the taste of the entire meal. Similarly in yoga, there needs to be a mix, a combination of asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation; when these four are practised together, the actual benefits of yoga are experienced.

Asana has the capacity to lead one into meditation and meditation has the potency to bring the body into a posture where it is experiencing stillness and comfort. Once the pranas are activated, the line to the deeper mind becomes clear, and meditation, of course, works with the deeper mind. Therefore, one should follow an integrated program incorporating asanas, pranayamas and meditation in the daily routine.

Why do problems occur if one does not prepare for meditation with hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Unfortunately, few people understand the real purpose behind the practice of asanas and pranayamas. They are used for health, physical beauty, body building and even as a sideshow in circuses and fairs. People often have no knowledge whatsoever of what asanas and pranayamas are intended to do. It seems that the words of Isaiah in the Bible are coming true: "Hear and hear, but never understand; see and see, but never perceive." *Isaiah* (6:9)

The purpose of asanas and pranayamas is to prepare the body and mind for meditation. In meditation we build energy, physically, mentally and psychically. But if the body and mind are not prepared and the energies are not balanced, there is conflict. The mind suffers, as it is unable to concentrate. The body suffers, as it is not accustomed to holding one posture for an extended period of time. All the faculties of the body and mind are stimulated, but without control. The nervous system is unable to cope with the rush of energy and thus more tension is created. The practitioner complains of pain in the limbs, difficulty in breathing, inability to achieve one-pointedness. Muscle and body spasms occur. Is this the way to meditate? Swami Satyananda says, "Meditation eventually leads to an elimination of duality." But how can we expect to arrive at that stage when we face so many problems within ourselves during meditation?

A powerhouse produces electricity, but before the power can be used one needs poles, wires, fuses and switches to direct it to where it is needed. The same thing happens in the body. Power is produced during meditation. The heart is the generator; the lungs act as transformers; the nervous system provides the wires; the mind is the main switch, and the glands are local switches. All the organs in the body play an important role in meditation.

How does kapalbhathi prepare one for meditation?

Swami Satyananda: Kapalbhathi is a powerful method of waking up the mind and is one of the best preparatory techniques for meditative practice. If one feels tired the mind can be energized and made alert with a few rounds of kapalbhathi. It also empties the mind of thoughts, emotional feelings and excessive visions and induces a tranquil, receptive state of mind. Experience has shown that the ideal meditation practice to follow kapalbhathi is chidakasha dharana.

Why is kapalbhathi a useful preparation for meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Kapalbhathi is particularly useful for spiritual aspirants as it arrests sensory distractions, thoughts, visions and mental chatter; calming the mind in preparation for meditation. At the same time, it energizes the mind so that one is not overcome by sleep while sitting for meditation. The effects also help those engaged in mental work.

Why are the bandhas useful preparation for meditation?

Swami Satyananda: Through the perfection of bandhas the yogi is able to lock himself into the eternal now, devoid of the dualities of existence, motion and change. In this state, his consciousness is unfettered by the modifications of thought, enabling him to merge into the field of unified consciousness. As such, the bandhas induce *pratyahara* sense withdrawal, and are preliminary techniques for meditation.

HATHA YOGA PRACTICES AS AN AID TO MEDITATION

How does hatha yoga help concentration?

Swami Sivananda: The practices of hatha yoga should be properly understood, as they are not merely physical and not only therapeutic. By stimulating certain chemicals, by balancing the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and by regulating the pranas, these practices improve the whole quality of one's meditation experience. When meditation is practised, it has to be worked at.

One may try to concentrate on a point, but the mind keeps slipping out of focus. However, if five rounds of any pranayama are practised, it takes no effort to concentrate, as when the prana is balanced, tranquillity and concentration come naturally. The heart, respiration, glandular secretions and nervous responses become synchronized. When the physiological body cooperates, concentration is effortless.

After hatha yoga has been practised and the nadis purified, the brain can easily be isolated from the senses. The senses constantly supply information to the brain, but if the wires are cut, the brain can be isolated. Once it is isolated, the brain relaxes, it has rest. This is the time to start meditation and to look into one's self. A different awareness and better brain functioning develops.

How do the flows of ida and pingala nadis affect the mind and body during meditation?

Swami Satyananda: When one sits for concentration practices, the *swara* changes – the breath which alternately flows through the left nostril and the right nostril, changes. Sometimes when concentration is practised, ida nadi is flowing, resulting in body pain and sleepiness, dullness, as ida nadi creates depression in the system. If concentration is practised when pingala nadi is flowing, no matter what one does, the mind continues to jump. Pingala nadi is *surya nadi*, the flow of the sun, and ida nadi is *chandra nadi*, the flow of the moon. Pingala nadi has vitality,

prana. Ida nadi has mental energy. Before practising concentration, one should try to awaken sushumna nadi, the balanced flow, by pranayama, but this doesn't happen all at once.

How can the swara be changed?

Swami Satyananda: One must know how to change the swara. There are many yoga postures which are intended to change the flow of the swara, such as padadhirasana, breath balancing pose. One sees photographs or pictures in India of sadhus resting on a staff placed under their armpit. It is known as a *yoga danda*, a yoga staff. When the yogi is trying to meditate, he first checks his swara and if he observes that the wrong breath is flowing, he changes it by placing the yoga danda under the armpit. This is a temporary provision. There are also permanent ways.

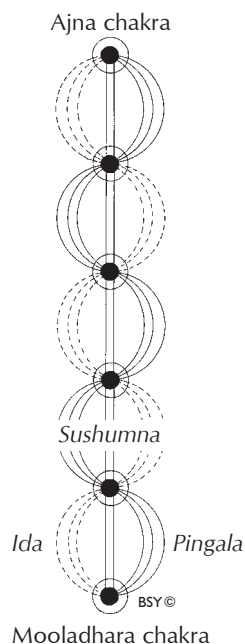
The texts on swara yoga say in unequivocal terms, that it is foolishness to do physical action or mental action when the balanced breath is flowing. When the balanced breath is flowing, that is, both nostrils are flowing freely, one should sit for meditation and there will be no difficulty at all.

Often people ask, "Swamiji, can I practise meditation first and hatha yoga later?" The answer is, "no." Such people consider meditation and hatha yoga as two compartments. In fact, they are not compartmental, they are complementary. Yoga postures are an aid to pranayama, pranayama is an aid to concentration, concentration leads to meditation.

When the pranas are steady, does concentration occur?

Swami Satyananda: Prana can never be motionless. The pranas are always moving, and the mind is ever-changing as well.

The major nadis



These two highly mobile energies need to be brought into a steady state. It is almost impossible to imagine how difficult this is. Concentration is extremely difficult. One may be able to forget oneself completely, but that is not concentration. One may be able to steer with ease amongst the visions, but that is not concentration. Concentration is unbroken awareness of one point at all times, like one line stretching into the far distance. It does not break, it does not turn, it does not reverse and it is not intercepted. It is unbroken and steady. One idea, the same idea, no other idea, no other thought. That is concentration.

How important is concentration in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Single-minded concentration is essential in all the practices, whether pranayama, asana or mudra. It is the essence of perfection in every form of yoga. There is a short parable which illustrates this. Once a disciple asked his guru to write down the greatest wisdom. The guru wrote, “attention”. The disciple asked if that was all and if the guru could add something more, as it was very brief. The guru then wrote, “attention, attention”. Still the disciple failed to understand and asked if there was a deeper explanation. So the guru wrote three times, “attention, attention, attention.” The disciple was completely puzzled and again questioned what it meant. The guru said, “attention means attention”. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:127) it states:

*Maarutasya vidhim sarvam manoyuktam samabhyaset;
Itaratra na kartavyaa manovrittirmaneeshinaa.*

All the pranayama methods are to be done with a concentrated mind. The wise man should not let his mind be involved in the modifications (vrittis).

In every situation, not only while practising pranayama, one must pay attention and become aware of the experiences, actions and thoughts in that moment. Development of awareness while awake leads to constant awareness in the deeper states of dhyana and samadhi.

How does the sattwic diet recommended by hatha yoga help with meditation?

Swami Sivananda: Meditation is possible only when the mind is full of sattwa guna. There is an intimate connection between the mind and food. One must eat good, sattwic, substantial, light, nutritious food. The stomach should not be loaded. A heavy meal is harmful. The night meal should be light for those who meditate.

How do meditation asanas affect the flows of prana?

Swami Niranjanananda:

For accessing the mental dimension, meditative asanas which redirect the flow of prana shakti in the body are used, and there are only eight: *sukhasana*, easy pose, *padmasana*, lotus pose, *ardha padmasana*, half-lotus pose, *swastikasana*, auspicious pose, *siddhasana*, accomplished pose for men, *siddha yoni asana*, accomplished pose for women, *veerasana*, hero's pose and *vajrasana*, thunderbolt pose.



Padmasana

Once one adopts a meditative posture, the energies of the body begin to flow along the nadis, energy pathways, in a specific manner according to how one is seated in that particular posture. The legs are placed in certain ways and the hands are placed in certain mudras, ensuring that the flow of prana shakti takes place through specific nerve channels or nadis. By creating contact with different parts of the body, this pranic flow is redirected back into the body and not allowed to be discharged.

Discharge of energy takes place through the extremities of the body much more than through any other part. This has

been recorded by Kirlian photography. Therefore, when the hands are placed on top of the knees, the energy is recycled into the body, into the legs. When one sits in padmasana or siddhasana, an energy circuit is created and prana begins to flow according to the posture.

In this manner, asanas are used to deepen mental awareness and attain mental tranquillity by redirecting the prana shakti. Therefore, these asanas are intended only for the purpose of meditation or internalization. The eight meditative asanas still the body and harmonize the pranas so that the mind becomes still and harmonious. In the *Hatharatnavali* (3:39) it is written:

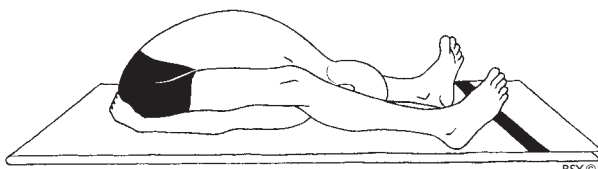
*Padmaasanasthito yogee naadeedvareshu poorayet;
Pooritam kriyate yastu sa bhukto naatra samshayah.*

The yogi who, sitting in padmasana, holds the air inhaled through the nostrils, is (surely to be) liberated. There is no doubt about it.

During meditations of several hours duration can one change the sitting asana?

Swami Sivananda: Those who meditate for four or five hours at one stretch can use two asanas in the beginning, either padmasana and vajrasana or siddhasana and vajrasana. Sometimes, the blood accumulates in one part of the legs or thighs and gives a little trouble. After two hours, change the asana from padmasana or siddhasana to vajrasana or stretch the legs at full length. Lean against a wall or a pillow. Keep the spine erect. This is the most comfortable asana. Join two chairs. Sit on one chair and stretch the legs on another chair. This is another contrivance.

Asana is really mental. Try to have a mental padmasana or mental siddhasana. If the mind is wandering, one cannot have a steady body or a steady physical pose. When the mind is steady or fixed in Brahman, the Supreme Consciousness, steadiness of the body automatically follows.



Koormasana

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What is the purpose of koormasana, the tortoise pose?

Swami Niranjanananda: Koormasana is practised for mental relaxation and introversion and induces a sense of composure, inner security and surrender. The effects of pleasure and pain are removed. Passion and fear subside, leaving the body and mind refreshed. This asana prepares the spiritual aspirant for the fifth stage of yogic practice, pratyahara, sense withdrawal, which is symbolized by the tortoise. It is stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:58):

*Yadaa samharate chaayam koormo'ngaaneeva sarvashah;
Indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyastasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.*

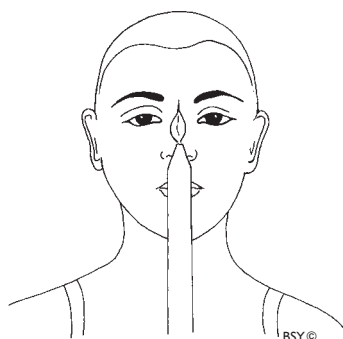
When one can withdraw the senses from association with objects, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs from external danger, then one is firmly fixed on the path towards wisdom.

How can trataka help a beginner to develop meditation?

Swami Sivananda: Meditation is an unbroken, uninterrupted or incessant flow of the idea of the object that is concentrated upon. If one closes the eyes when doing trataka and mentally visualizes the object of trataka, it is concrete meditation or *saguna* meditation. Concrete meditation on an object is necessary for an untrained mind, in the beginning. If one meditates on an abstract idea, it constitutes *nirguna* meditation.

What is the importance of trataka in relation to meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: In the classical hatha yoga texts, trataka is described as one of the six shatkarmas, or cleansing techniques. Here it acts as a stepping stone between



Trataka

the physically oriented and mentally oriented techniques which lead to higher awareness. In this sense trataka forms a bridge between hatha yoga and raja yoga. When trataka is practised until the tears roll down, it is part of hatha yoga, but when it is practised with inner visualization, it is part of raja yoga.

Through the practice of trataka one can develop the ability to focus the mind at any time. This is necessary in the higher practices of yoga. When the mind has not been taught to concentrate, and meditation has been practised only superficially, in deep meditation states the pull or attraction of *pratyaya*, the deep impressions, is extremely powerful, as there is no means of balance. The ability that is gained through trataka becomes useful at that moment. The different forms of trataka also help to channel or focus the pranic energies.

Trataka is a process of concentrating the mind and curbing its oscillating tendencies. The purpose is to make the mind completely one-pointed and to arouse inner vision. In trataka, the result is a blanking out of visual perception; in the wake of this suspension the central nervous system begins to function in isolation. This experience is known by yogis as sushumna awakening. When the brain is isolated from the sense modalities and any associated mental processes, ideas and memories triggered by such thought impressions, spiritual consciousness emerges. The higher mind, liberated from time and space, is experienced. Sushumna is awakened.

During trataka, what does the feeling of becoming the flame mean?

Swami Satyananda: That is the state of *dhyana*, total identification with the object of concentration. It is a good

state of mind to achieve, as in normal life there is always a disassociation between one's awareness and one's experience. Whatever that experience may be, one is observing it, but if through some method one can become one with the experience, or with the event that is taking place within, that becomes the state of dhyana. Such an experience should be intensified with further sadhana.

Why is pranayama a pathway to meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: The cumulative effect of pranayama is that the mind becomes steady like a candle flame in a still room. The disturbing energies are removed and the prana moves in the ether principle. The velocity of the mind is slowly decreased, but its power is increased. Rajas and tamas are subdued and the tossing of the mind is arrested. The mind becomes one-pointed and achieves dharana, concentration, and dhyana, meditation. In the *Yoga Sutras* (2:53), Sage Patanjali says:

Dhaaranaasu cha yogyataa manasah.

The mind becomes fit for concentration (by the practice of pranayama).



Nadi Shodhana

The advantage of stepping into meditation through pranayama is that the mind remains dynamic and does not slip into a state of hypnosis. Some forms of dhyana yoga may induce hypnosis if practised for too long. Pranayama prevents this, and also keeps the mind from becoming distracted during meditation. Usually, during meditation the mind wanders and ponders upon daily interactions and passions. One may bring it back to the meditation, but again and again it dissipates. When

pranayama is combined with the practice of meditation, this wandering tendency of the mind is overcome, as the process of pranayama stills the mind and makes it one-pointed.

The practices of pranayama develop the quality of human consciousness and should be adopted with this attitude. Control over the mind is achieved by regular and systematic practice, so that one is able to handle the involuntary processes of the body, brain and mind. This means that one becomes the master of oneself and one's destiny. At the physical level, the high pressure and stimulation exerted on the nervous system during the practices of pranayama cause the consciousness to be internalized, so that super-sensory perceptions become possible. Once the physical structure is changed, the mental substance automatically undergoes a change.

How does the pranayama of hatha yoga culminate in the meditation of raja yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Sage Patanjali simply says that pranayama is inhalation, exhalation and retention. This is due to the understanding that in order to attain this level of raja yoga pranayama practice, one must already have done hatha yoga breathing exercises such as kapalbhāti. Although kapalbhāti is identified as a pranayama, in the context of raja yoga the word kapalbhāti means the combination of the different hatha yoga breathing techniques that awaken and purify the vital force within.

Once the vital force is purified and the nadis are clear, the chakra blockages are removed. The final stage of pranayama consists purely of receiving the vital energy through inhalation, releasing the the vital force through exhalation, and *kumbhaka*, stability of that vital force. Without this attainment, meditation cannot begin.

What are the subtle effects of bhastrika pranayama?

Swami Niranjanananda: The practice of bhastrika, bellows breathing, balances and strengthens the nervous system,

inducing peace, tranquillity and one-pointedness of mind. While practising, all the pranas in the body begin to vibrate, but at the end of the practice the mind is completely stilled. In fact, the meditative state can be reached effortlessly through the practice of bhastrika. The yogic texts state that bhastrika enables prana to break through the three knots in the sushumna passage, making way for the kundalini shakti to flow upwards freely. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* it says (2:66–67):

*Kundalee bodhakam kshipram pavanam sukhadam hitam;
Brahmanaadeemukhe samsthakaphaadyargalanaashanam.*

*Samyaggaatrasamudbhootagranthitrayavibhedakam;
Visheshenaiva kartavyam bhastraakhyam kumbhakantvidam.*

This (bhastrika) quickly arouses kundalini. It is pleasant and beneficial, and removes obstruction due to excess mucus accumulated at the entrance to brahma nadi (the subtle nadi within sushumna). (66)

This kumbhaka called bhastrika enables the three granthis (psychic/pranic knots) to be broken. Thus, it is the duty of the yogi to practise bhastrika. (67)

How important is ujjayi in meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Ujjayi is a deep breathing practice which is perfected by relaxing the breath rather than forcing it. Ujjayi is also known as the psychic breath, as it induces a meditative state and leads to highly subtle states of mind. It is an indispensable part of many meditative techniques such as mantra japa, ajapa japa, kriya yoga and prana vidya.

Why is bhramari an aid to meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: In bhramari pranayama the vibration of the humming sound creates a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system, relieving cerebral tension, stress, anxiety and insomnia. It is a powerful technique for enhancing

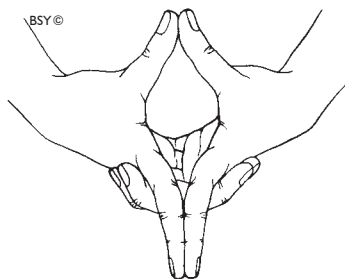


Bhramari pranayama

memory and concentration. It induces a meditative state by harmonizing the mind and directing the awareness inward.

How do mudras and bandhas support meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Many philosophies, religions and systems of thought in the world believe that it is necessary to completely detach oneself from the external world in order to experience some sort of spiritual or inner realization. The main aim of mudras and bandhas is to help one attain an inner state in which external emotions and events do not scatter the mental state. One should be able to keep the mind one-pointed in prayer or meditation and not allow any negative feelings or reactions to manifest internally.



Yoni mudra

There is a particular process involved in the practice of mudras and bandhas. One can activate, expand and absorb oneself in the sensations manifesting inside by adopting certain techniques. Making use of physical and psychic gestures activates the sensations of annamaya kosha,

pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha in order to go inside them. Mudras and bandhas play a significant role in this second process.

What is the purpose of unmani mudra?

Swami Niranjanananda: The word *unmani* literally means ‘no mind’ or ‘not thinking’. The state of unmani arises during meditation. Unmani implies that state which is beyond thought, a state where all attachment to the world of objects is dispelled. In this state, the awareness functions without the hindrance of conflicting thoughts and analysis. Unmani induces a meditative state. It also calms stress and agitation. Those suffering from depression, however, should avoid this introverting practice.

MEDITATION OF THE BODY

How is the body a reflection of the mind?

Swami Sivananda: The body with its organs is none other than the mind. The physical body is the outward manifestation of the mind. Mind is the subtle form of this physical body. The mind contemplating upon the body becomes the body itself and then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it. If the mind is paralyzed, the body cannot express intelligence. Without water, can a garden exist? It is the mind which transacts all business and is the highest of the bodies. Mental actions are the real actions.

The mind performs all actions very speedily in the *linga sharira*, subtle body. The gross body, however, is inert and knows nothing. Even if the gross body is dissolved, the mind will quickly assume fresh bodies to its liking. The physical body is the mould, as it were, made by the mind for its own enjoyment, for the outpouring of its energy, in this way gaining different experiences of the world through the five sense organs.

Only the actions of the mind are indeed actions, not those of the body. The body is actually the thoughts, moods, convictions and emotions manifested, made visible to the

naked eye. It is a point worthy of note that every cell in the body suffers or grows, receives a life-impulse or a death-impulse from every thought that enters the mind; one tends to grow into the image of that which one thinks about the most. When the mind is turned to a particular thought and dwells on it, a particular vibration of matter is set up and the more this vibration is caused, the more it tends to repeat itself, becoming a habit, becoming automatic.

The body follows the mind and imitates its changes. If one concentrates one's thoughts, the eyes become fixed. Every change in thought makes a vibration in the mental body and this, transmitted to the physical body, causes activity in the nervous matter of the brain. This activity in the nerve cells causes many electrical and chemical changes within them. It is thought activity which causes these changes.

How does hatha yoga take the body from a state of action to a state of meditation?

Swami Niranjanananda: We are constantly involved in states of action and relaxation, but when the attention begins to be directed inwards, even physical action becomes meditative action, mental action becomes meditative action, emotional expression becomes meditative action, and behaviour becomes meditative action.

Even the mental conflicts that arise in the mind – anxiety, anger, frustration, depression – can also become a meditative experience, and this is the whole objective of yoga. Therefore, from action we bring the body, we bring the mind, we bring the emotions to the state of rest, and from the state of rest we take the body, we take the mind, we take the emotions, we take the intellect to the state of meditation. These are the stages of yoga: action, relaxation and meditation, all of which are experienced at all levels of the personality.

Traditionally yoga has been viewed as a technique, as a method which can lead to this internal awareness. People

call this internal awareness by different names; some call it self-realization, some call it *moksha* and some call it *nirvana*.

The main objective is to achieve this meditation process. It is easy to understand that the mind can be this meditative process, but it is difficult to understand how the body can reach a meditative state. The body can meditate. The big toe can meditate. The hair on the head can meditate. It may seem extraordinary but it is true. Every part of the body has the ability to experience meditative states. Those people who believe that consciousness and energy are in every part of the body are one step closer to understanding this. Even those people who do not believe this, and just view the body as matter and the mind as mind, can be made to understand that matter – the body – can achieve a meditative state, but this only happens through experience.

How does it happen? It cannot be explained, it is a matter of experience. However, hints can be given about it. Everyone has heard of hatha yoga. Traditionally hatha yoga is the yoga of awakening the solar energy and the lunar energy, the active energy and the passive energy, the prana and chitta energy within the vital and mental fields. Most yoga practitioners are aware that within the body there is a pranic field and this energy field can be controlled, activated and awakened by certain switches which are located in different parts of the body, known as chakras. They are one method of taking the body from a state of action to a state of meditation.

In hatha yoga is meditation regarded as a state of the body as well as the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: In the six shatkarma practices of hatha yoga there are three physical practices: neti, dhauti and basti. The other three are subtle practices: nauli is a pranic practice, trataka is a technique of concentration and kapalbhati is a technique for cerebral stimulation. These six practices aim at harmonizing the subtle functions of the physical structure. Combined with the practice of asana

and pranayama, they become a powerful system for inner harmony.

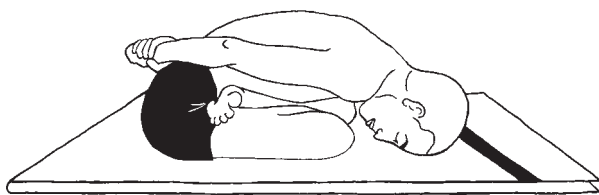
The aim of yoga is meditation, but yoga has not isolated the meditative process from the body. Yoga does not say that the meditative state is of the mind alone. Yoga says that the meditative state is a state of body as well as the mind, and that asana, pranayama and shatkarma lead to the physical meditative state. In this context meditation means awakening and using the natural faculties of body, mind and spirit.

After the practice of asana, pranayama and shatkarma, when the physical activities have been regulated and the functions of the inner body harmonized, the effect of physical harmony and balance influences the mental behaviour. Then begin the practices of concentration which specifically deal with the mind.

DEEPENING MEDITATION

What is the role of mudras in relation to the mind?

Swami Sivananda: Mudras concern the mind. They represent seals – mudra means seal. They seal the mind with the soul or *atman*. They do not allow the mind to wander outside towards objects. They direct the externalizing mind towards atman in the chambers of the heart and fix it there.



Yoga mudra

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Which hatha yoga practices deepen the meditative state?

Swami Satyananda: Sit down every morning in siddhasana, the best of asanas. Both men and women can practise it, as

in yogic life there is no difference between the two. Male and female are the same; any differences are only imagined by the ignorant. Become steady in siddhasana, then fix the hands in yoni mudra or chin mudra. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:34) it is written:

*Siddham padmam tathaa simham bhadram veti chatushtayam
Shreshtham tatraapi cha sukhe tishthetsiddhaasane sadaa.*

Siddhasana, padmasana, simhasana and bhadrasana, these are the four main asanas. Always sit comfortably in siddhasana, as it is the best.

Learn how to practise moola, uddiyana and jalandhara bandhas, nasikagra and bhrumadhya drishti. Learn the correct way of practising *pooraka*, inhalation, *rechaka*, exhalation, and *kumbhaka*, stopping the breath, either from your guru or from an experienced teacher. The inner prana can be stimulated by the practice of pranayama and thereby increased to a greater quantum. The brain requires maximum prana, and for the practice of meditation, it needs an increased supply. It is for this reason that pranayama is practised before commencing meditation practice. Practise pranayama for five to twenty minutes every day. This is the easiest and quickest method to awaken the state of dhyana, meditation, but the preparations have to be perfect.

The body must undergo a process of purification to eliminate toxins. The diet must be taken care of. This body is not a graveyard for a dead man. Put living nourishment inside it, not dead substance. If one is definite about dedicating one's self to the fulfilment of the greatest of tasks in life called dhyana yoga, certain sacrifices have to be made.

If this practice creates any kind of physical difficulty, it indicates that one's preparations are not complete. One must go back to the asanas. Practise *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand pose, *halasana*, the plough pose, *siddhasana*, the accomplished pose, *supta vajrasana*, the sleeping thunderbolt

pose, *matsyasana*, the fish pose, *bhujangasana*, the cobra pose, and so on. These asanas are intended to create light impulses in the chakras. Some asanas can even awaken certain chakras directly. It is not necessary to wait for higher practices. For example, *sarvangasana* helps awaken vishuddhi. The practice of *sirshasana*, the headstand pose, creates a light stirring in sahasrara and so on. These simple practices contribute to eventual awakening.

Don't think that yoga is a form of physical exercise. These postures are designed to create union between Shiva and Shakti, between prana and apana, and prana and chitta. When this union is perfected, the state of dhyana arises.

Does hatha yoga lead to pratyahara?

Swami Niranjanananda: In the eightfold, *ashtanga* yoga of Sage Patanjali, there is asana, pranayama and then pratyahara. Why does pranayama come before pratyahara? What is the purpose of pranayama and how is it practised? In the *Bhagavad Gita* Arjuna asks Krishna, "Can you tell me how one can perfect pratyahara?" and Krishna tells Arjuna that one has to practise pranayama. Without the practice of pranayama one is not able to awaken the energy within oneself, as right now all the energies are directed outwards. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (5:27–28), Krishna says:

*Sparshaankritvaa bahirbaahyaamshchakshushchaivaantare
bhruvoh;*

Pranaapaanau samau kritvaa naasaabhyantaracharinau.

Yatendriyamanobuddhirmunirmokshaparaayanah;

Vigatechchhaabhyakrodho yah sadaa mukta eva sah.

Shutting out all thoughts of the external environment, with the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows, having equalized the currents of prana and apana flowing within the nostrils, having controlled the senses, mind and intellect, such a contemplative soul, intent on liberation and free from desire, fear and anger, is truly free forever. (27–28)

According to Krishna, one should practise shutting out all thought of external enjoyments, fix the gaze on the space between the eyebrows, regulate the prana shakti and regulate the prana and apana which flow as breath within the nostrils. Only after regulating the prana is one able to bring the senses, mind and intellect under control.

How do the practices of hatha yoga lead to dhyana?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga is not only asanas and pranayamas. Technically speaking, hatha yoga means those practices by which one brings about the union of the two forces in the body: *ha* and *tha*, sun and moon, ida and pingala, or sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

If one has been practising hatha yoga and sushumna begins to awaken, no other method is necessary. No sadhana or technique is needed. Just close the eyes and become meditative. Even if one has hundreds and thousands of problems, the moment of sushumna awakening is the moment of transcendence. That is why yogis say, “Awaken sushumna!” It is also said in the tantras that until sushumna is awakened, no matter what practices are done, what gods are worshipped, which guru is visited, what *shastras*, scriptures, one is versed in, one will attain nothing.

Therefore, approach dhyana by one of two methods, either directly or through the practices of hatha yoga, and one day you will find yourself in meditation. The hatha yoga system is the purification of the body, followed by asanas, and then by pranayamas. Beyond that, there is nothing to be done – everything just happens.

Pranayama is the gateway to dhyana. Through pranayama one can go as deep as one wants. Nothing has to be done except to practise some of the shatkarmas and pranayama with jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandhas. One doesn't have to control or fight with the mind. Just do the practices for ten or fifteen minutes every day and in the course of time you will find that your mind is already in dhyana. This is the hatha yoga system.

How is the experience of meditation affected by the flows of the major nadis?

Swami Satyananda: If ida is flowing and one is practising meditation, one grows sleepy, the brain produces delta waves and a state of mind arises called *laya*, a state of unconsciousness or total absorption in thought processes. If the right nostril is flowing and one is trying to meditate, events that one is concerned with in the outside world will be experienced, the brain will produce beta waves and many thoughts will come and go at the same time. When both nostrils flow equally, that means sushumna is flowing. When sushumna does not function, one cannot concentrate even with effort. Therefore, it is important that the functioning of ida and pingala are harmonized, making it possible for sushumna to function.

When this occurs, one should give up all worldly work and meditate. It is commonly experienced that meditation is wonderful at this time, as there is harmony in the entire system. When sushumna flows, one can meditate without any difficulty. In this state, those planes which are real, which are pure and which are on the path to true knowledge, are more likely to be experienced. Therefore, for success in meditation, make sure that sushumna is flowing. Awakening sushumna, making sushumna nadi flow, is the most important step in yoga.

How important are the hatha yoga techniques for awakening sushumna?

Swami Satyananda: The practices of asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas have an ultimate bearing upon the awakening of sushumna nadi. If this nadi does not wake up, no matter what method is employed, meditation will not take place. Even if one does not care about the nature of the mind, if one has a technique which can send energy waves through sushumna, the mind will automatically be transcended. The mind doesn't have to be controlled, the mind has to be transcended.

The shakti is dormant, just as oil is dormant in sesame seeds, just as fire is dormant in wood; in the same way, the force of shakti is also dormant. It is not in action. Therefore, there are practices for awakening this force, not just one, but many hundreds of thousands of practices, and one of these practices may suit you and me, and the other practices may suit someone else.

Why does meditation occur naturally when sushumna is active?

Swami Satyananda: If sushumna is active, meditation occurs by itself. If one wants to bring light to a room, electrical connections must be made. In the same way, activation of sushumna must take place before the awakening of kundalini.

When kundalini wakes up, passes through sushumna, and joins ida and pingala in ajna chakra, the lower form of energy is withdrawn. The small generators are switched off and the greater energy begins to flow through these nadis, awakening the different zones in the brain and supplying energy to the whole physical body.

DHARANA AND DHYANA IN GHERANDA SAMHITA

According to the teachings of Swami Niranjanananda

Why does the hatha yoga text *Gheranda Samhita* include five dharana practices?

Within the broad category of mudras, Sage Gheranda has included bandhas and dharanas. They are listed in *Gheranda Samhita* (3:1–3):

*Mahaamudraa nabhomudraa uddeeyaanam jalandharam
Moolabandho mahaabandho mahaabedhashcha khecharee.*

*Vipareetakaree yonirvajronee shaktichalanee;
Taadaagee maandukee mudraa shaambhavee panchadhaaranaa.*

*Ashvinee paashinee kaakee maatangee cha bhujanginee;
Panchavimshatimudraashcha siddhidaa iha yoginaam.*

Sage Gheranda said: maha mudra, nabho mudra, uddiyana bandha, jalandhara bandha, moola bandha, maha bandha, maha bheda mudra, khechari mudra, vipareeta karani mudra, yoni mudra, vajroni mudra, shakti chalini mudra, tadagi mudra, manduki mudra, shambhavi mudra, the five dharanas or concentrations, ashwini, pashinee, kaki, matangi and bhujangini are the twenty-five mudras. These enable yogis to attain siddhi, perfection or mastery. (1–3)

In these verses sixteen mudras, four bandhas and five concentration practices: parthivi dharana, ambhasi dharana, agneyi dharana, vayviye dharana and akashi dharana, are described.

Bandhas are mudras with a specific ‘locking’ function. The five concentration practices or dharanas he includes focus and lock the prana and awareness on a specific point or quality, using psychic rather than physical tools. They are also given in *Shiva Samhita* (3:63):

*Asminkaale mahaayogee panchadha dhaaranam charet;
Yena bhooraadisiddhih syaat tato bhootabhayaapahaa.*

At that time let the great yogi practise the fivefold dharana forms of concentration on Vishnu, by which command over the five elements is obtained, and fear of injuries from any one of them removed.

Sage Gheranda has described these five concentration practices, *pancha dharana*, under the category of mudra, but actually he is explaining one of the basic principles of kundalini yoga. The dharanas are advanced practices and, from the ‘mechanical’ point of view, require some knowledge of the use of mantras and yantras according to the kundalini yoga tradition. One also has to prepare one’s consciousness. Traditionally, these techniques can only be used after some success in the practice of shambhavi mudra.

From the pancha dharana, energy from the five elements of the universe – earth, water, fire, air and space – is acquired.

Mastery over the five elements of nature is the culmination of the pancha dharana. An adept can go to heaven and return while still embodied. One attains the ability to direct the consciousness to travel in any direction desired.

Why is mastery of pranayama necessary in order to practise the pancha dharanas described in *Gheranda Samhita*?

Any kind of dharana practice is incomplete until mastery over pranayama is achieved. These dharanas can be practised with *pooraka*, breathing in, and holding the breath inside. This should be developed naturally without strain by first being aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and letting it gradually lengthen.

Initially ujjayi breathing is used, observing the breath moving up and down the spine between mooladhara and the throat. In the beginning the only aim is to gradually achieve control over the breath. After three or four months, holding the breath for up to one minute is practised. Thus the capacity of the body is increased little by little. In this way, the goal can finally be achieved.

With expert guidance moorcha pranayama can be incorporated. The breath is retained for up to three or four minutes during part of the practice. Advanced practitioners just relax and watch the spontaneous flow or stoppage of the breath. The prana is to be retained inside.

One begins with short practices of five or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with an alert awareness and a witnessing attitude. Eventually the practice of dharana, concentration, can be done for approximately two hours.

Remember that these practices are not perfected in a day. Yogis keep doing a practice continuously for years; only then is mastery or perfection of the practice attained. It is not possible to inhale deeply and retain the prana inside on the very first day. In order to retain the prana inside for up to two hours, it is imperative to have mastered pranayama prior to the practice.

What is the purpose of practising concentration on the earth element?

The practice of concentrating on the earth element, *parthivi dharana*, more commonly called *prithvi dharana*, is an attempt to awaken mooladhara chakra through meditation and concentration. It is said in this mantra that the *ishta devata*, the chosen deity, of mooladhara chakra is Lord Brahma, whose function is to create. The process of creation commences with the earth element. Whether it is vegetation, a mountain, a stone, an animal, a bird or a human being, everything is created out of *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element. There is also the goddess of the skin, of the sense of touch, whose name is Dakini. Brahma and Dakini are the controllers of mooladhara chakra. Instructions are given to imagine or concentrate on the earth element in the heart during the practice, *hridisthaapitam*. Here *hrid* does not mean the physical heart; rather it means focusing the antahkarana, inner tools of consciousness, on the yantra. In *Gheranda Samhita* (3:17–18) it is written:

*Yattatvam haritaaladesharachitam bhaumam lakaaraanvitam,
Vedaasram kamalaasanenasahitam kritvaa hridisthaapitam;
Praanam tatra vileeya panchaghatikaashchittaanvitam
dhaarayet;*

Aishaa stambhakaree sadaa kshitijayam kuryaadadhodhaaranaa.

*Paarthiveedhaaranaamudraam yah karoti tu nityashah;
Mrityunjayah svayam so'pi sa siddho vicharedbhuv.*

The colour of the earth element is yellow like orpiment (a yellow mineral used as a pigment), the bija or seed mantra is *Lam*, it is square in shape and Brahma is the God. Manifest it with the yogic power, retain it in the heart and hold the prana there up to five ghata (about two hours). It is known as parthivi mudra or adhodharana mudra. After mastering it, a practitioner becomes the conqueror of the earth. (17)

One who practises prithvi dharana wins over death and wanders over the earth as a siddha, a perfected person. (18)

In this first verse the *yantra*, or geometrical blueprint, of earth is referred to. He refers to the earth element as yellow. It is square in shape, and it is to be retained in the heart, which means deep inside, and the practitioner has to be aware of its *bija*, seed, mantra *Lam*.



Prithvi tattwa yantra

This verse says that a person who masters this practice achieves victory over the earth element, its merits and demerits. It is believed in yoga that one lifetime is probably not adequate to perfect a *sadhana* or practice. These techniques should be practised slowly and only under the guidance of a competent teacher. If force is applied, the responsibility is not that of yoga or the teacher.

How should one prepare the mind for the practice of dharana on the water element?

It is said that swadhisthana chakra is the symbol of the unconscious state. Yoga regards the unconscious mind as extensive, large and deep like an ocean, the depth and limit of which no one has been able to gauge. In the symbol of swadhisthana, a small form of the moon is shown in the sky. The light of the night sky over the ocean is not the light of knowledge or the ray of discrimination or wisdom or feeling. This moon, with the stars in the sky, is considered to be a symbol of mental energy. This mental energy, *manas shakti* or *chitta shakti*, illuminates the unconscious state itself.

Only once the attitude of witnessing the samskaras and karmas becomes an established part of the personality can the practice of dharana on swadhisthana chakra be beneficially undertaken for extended periods of time. Before practising this dharana, it is essential



Apas tattwa yantra

to understand and expand the awareness into the conscious and subconscious states of mind. Practising yoga nidra on a regular basis helps to purify the conscious and subconscious states, releasing samskaras that bubble to the surface of the mind as one relaxes. Gradually one comes to know the mental actions and reactions that take place in the subconscious state of mind.

According to yoga, samskaras and karmas manifest strongly in the unconscious mind, as it is their *karmakshetra*, or field of activity. It is their place of origin and storehouse. When the need for something is felt, it comes up into the conscious state. When karmas and samskaras manifest strongly inside, tumbling and disrupting the life of a sadhaka so that one becomes scattered and can scarcely control one's life, this dharana is practised. It is not done all the time.

Prior to practising this dharana it is imperative to quieten the modifications of the mind in chitta. The first step is to understand and calm down the thoughts, feelings and modifications of mind which emerge in the conscious state and play out their roles. Next, one should try to understand the subconscious by getting to know the mental actions and reactions that take place in the subconscious mind. Only once the conscious and the subconscious are completely purified and are under control, when only samskaras and karmas remain, is this practice of dharana on swadhisthana chakra undertaken.

There is also a hint about this dharana in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. This dharana is practised in order to achieve *nirbija avastha*, the seedless state. This means that when one achieves control over the modifications of mind, intellect and chitta in the right manner, only samskaras remain. Then one also starts exhausting samskaras, making them rootless. It is at that time that *ambhasi dharana*, concentration on the water element, *jala* or *apas tattwa*, spontaneously takes place.

Does Sage Gheranda give any precautions regarding the practice of dharana on the water element?

Gheranda Samhita (3:21) says that it is imperative to keep this practice secret:

*Iyam tu paramaa mudraa gopaneeyaa prayatnatah;
Prakaashaatsiddhihaanihsyaatsatyam vachmi cha tattvatah.*

It is an important mudra and it is imperative to keep it secret. If a practitioner describes this practice to others or discloses this technique, his siddhi is destroyed. This is the truth.

Why is this said? It is an important practice that involves looking into the depths of the mind. If one forces oneself prematurely into the practice, the responsibility lies with the practitioner, not the technique. These techniques should be practised slowly and proper guidance should be followed. Without first mastering the technique, how can guidance be given to others with whom the technique may be shared? What is given here is an outline of the practice, a few words lashed together like a raft suitable for sailing in a serene lake. To cross the ocean a fully equipped vessel is needed and the instructions of the ship's captain have to be followed as the weather changes.

How should the pranic awakening associated with agni tattwa be managed?

According to kundalini yoga, manipura chakra is related to *agni tattwa*, the fire element. The yantra of agni tattwa is an inverted red triangle and the mandala of manipura chakra contains an inverted red triangle with a picture of Surya, the sun god, in the centre. Its vehicle is a ram. Manipura chakra is considered to be a centre of prana shakti. Even in the gross form when food is eaten, digestion takes place in the manipura region. In the subtle state, too, awakening or purification of prana takes place with the awakening of manipura chakra. This chakra is responsible



Agni tattwa yantra

for the activity of the personality, the life force and dynamism. Their opposite characteristics, such as laziness, depression and sluggishness are the merits and demerits of manipura chakra.

Manipura chakra is the storage centre of prana. The symbol of this energy or power is the sun god. The *ishta*, chosen deity, is Rudra, a form of Shiva – *rudra* means one who acquires a fierce form. Until prana shakti is under control, it remains in a fierce form. When prana is awakened inside, it is possible for this shakti or energy to assume the form of a furious fire and burn the body and mind.

The point is that prana exists in the body in the form of fierce energy. When control is achieved over prana by means of consciousness, this prana grants all types of *siddhis*, powers, by coming under the control of the practitioner. However, if it is uncontrolled, the person becomes like *Bhasmasura*, a demon, meaning that he becomes responsible for reducing himself to ashes. Therefore, do not practise these tattwa dharanas without a competent guide.

Why is control over the feelings important when practising dharana on the air element?

According to kundalini yoga, anahata chakra relates to *vayu tattwa*, the air element. This chakra is related to feelings and experiences. Dual feelings manifest inside, love and

compassion and also ill-feeling and anger. Anahata chakra has a link with the subconscious mental state in one's life. The reactions that originate in the subconscious mind influence anahata. The main thing in anahata chakra is to achieve control over the feelings, whether positive or negative. In *Gheranda Samhita* (3:26) it is written:



Vayu tattwa yantra

*Shathaaya bhaktiheenaaya na deyam yasyakasyachit;
Datte cha siddhihaanih syaatsatyam vachmi cha chanda te.*

This dharana should never be disclosed to an undevoted and wicked person. By doing so, siddhi is destroyed. My above statement is true.

When complete control over feeling, experience and behaviour is achieved, anahata chakra awakens. If internal feelings are even a little out of control, anahata chakra cannot be awakened. Therefore, it is imperative that the antahkarana is pure for the awakening of this chakra. Vayviye dharana should not be practised if one is emotionally unwell. It is not a therapeutic technique, rather it is to explore one's inner nature once relative balance and clarity have been achieved. Vayviye dharana leads to the awakening of anahata chakra and eventual freedom from emotional turmoil.

Why is akashi dharana of particular importance for purifying the mind?

According to kundalini yoga, vishuddhi chakra is related to *akasha tattwa*, the ether or space element. It is also a symbol of the pure state of consciousness. In the four lower chakras one faces impure states of consciousness: disorders, feelings, uncontrolled energy, fear, insecurity, and so on. All these are impure states related to life. On reaching vishuddhi chakra, the barriers and borders of antahkarana – whether it is mind, intellect, chitta or ahamkara – are crossed and a pure, conscious state of being is attained.

Practising this dharana helps one to awaken vishuddhi chakra, thereby attaining a pure state. It is also beneficial for one's ability to communicate. The sadhaka can open the gates of *moksha*, liberation, with the help of akashi dharana.



Akasha tattwa yantra

What is meant by dhyana in Gheranda Samhita?

One-pointed awareness, *ekagrata*, of an object or thought process is dhyana, meditation. In his discussion of *sapta sadhana*, the seven means or practices, Sage Gheranda defined *pratyaksha* by saying that if the subtle experiences of the mind can be clarified in front of the inner eye, the inner mental vision, just as clearly as when something is seen in front of the open eyes, that is considered to be a state of meditation.

This state of *pratyaksha* is not the state of *laya*, dissolution, where one does not see anything. Neither is it a state of sensual experience. On the contrary, it is a state in which one sees an inner experience, feels it and establishes oneself in it.

One point has been emphasized – the clarifying of subtle experience in one's mental vision. If this point is understood, meditation is understood. For example, in the practice of yoga nidra, objects such as trees, plants, fruits, flowers and other items are named and the practitioner is asked to visualize them. In the beginning, nothing can be seen. The initial stage is just imagination, but one keeps on drawing that form or figure in one's mind. When the state of imagination is deep and the item is observed clearly inside like a photocopy, that state is called meditation.

When *ekagrata* or one-pointedness is acquired, it transforms into the state of meditation, and whatever one thinks or imagines in this state of meditation is clearly visualized. Anything that is thought or imagined fructifies; it becomes evident or visible. In yoga, this state is referred to through the image of *kalpa vriksha*, the wish-fulfilling tree.

During the practice of meditation the mind becomes so powerful due to one-pointedness that it acquires the form of the *kalpa vriksha*, a tree which yields anything that is desired. Whatever one wishes is fulfilled. In meditation the flow of consciousness is just like a flow of oil, without any obstruction. In *pratyahara* there is internal awareness. When the mind externalizes, one pulls it back again and engages

it. For two or three minutes the mind remains there as long as one is attentive. As soon as the attention is diverted, the mind starts wandering. Thus, in *pratyahara*, awareness and consciousness keep on coming and going. In concentration, *dharana*, the speed of this process is reduced and one can become one-pointed or externalized at will. However, one's effort does not work in meditation.

Meditation is not a practice. Meditation is a state of continuous dynamic consciousness without any obstruction. That is why it is said that meditation is never practised; rather, the state of meditation is acquired, it is experienced. It is like the difference between pouring oil and water. When oil is poured from one pot to another, it comes out in a thick, smooth, continuous flow without any hindrance. When it falls into the other pot, it does not splash and spill like water. The only movement is where the stream of oil is actually falling. The state of meditation is also like that. When there are drips and spills, one is in the state of *pratyahara* and *dharana*. However, when the mind does not waver, when there is no dissipation or obstruction while moving from the externalized state to the internalized state, that is the final stage of meditation.

What techniques does Sage Gheranda give for experiencing dhyana?

The human structure or constitution has three main elements: body, mind and spirit. Different states of meditation are experienced in these three components, and in order to make that experience deep and vivid, different processes or techniques are adopted. In the meditative state, when a physical form is adopted in order to move ahead with the experience, this process is called *sthoola dhyana* or gross meditation. When one wants to attain the experience of light, of the *atma*, the soul, that process is called *jyoti dhyana*. When one unites with the soul, it is called *sukshma dhyana* or subtle meditation. Sage Gheranda introduces these three states in *Gheranda Samhita* (6:1):

*Sthoolam jyotisthaasookshmam dhyaanasya trividham viduh;
Sthoolam moortimayam proktam jyotistejomayam tathaa;
Sookshmam bindumayam brahma kundalee paradevataa.*

Meditation is of three types: sthoola dhyana, jyoti dhyana and sukshma dhyana. Sthoola dhyana (gross or physical meditation) is that in which one meditates on the physical form (of one's *sishta deva* or deity). Jyotirmaya dhyana (dhyana full of light) is that in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahman. Sukshma dhyana (subtle meditation) is on Brahman as bindu, as kundalini shakti.

Is dhyana an experience or a technique?

The state of meditation is achieved; it is not a technique. Then why does Sage Gheranda describe techniques?

Two techniques of *sthoola dhyana*, basic meditation are given. The first is meditation on the heart centre or anahata chakra. The second is meditation on brahmarandhra or sahasrara chakra. These are described in *Gheranda Samhita* (6:2–8)

*Svakeeyahridaye dhyayetsudhaasaagaramuttamam;
Tanmadhye ratnadveepam tu suraratnavaalukaamayam.*

*Chaturdikshu neepatarum bahupushpasamanvitam;
Neepopavanasankulairveshtitam parikhaa iva.*

*Maalateemallikaajaateekaisaraishchampakaistathaa;
Paarijaataih sthalapadmaigandhaamoditadinmukhaih.*

*Tanmadhye samsmaredyogee kalpavriksham manoharam;
Chatuhshaakhaachaturvedam nityapushpaphalaanvitam.*

*Bhramaraah kokilaastatra gunjanti nigadanti cha;
Dhyayettatra sthiro bhootvaa mahaamaanikyamandapam.*

*Tanmadhye tu smaredyogee paryankam sumanoharam;
Tatreshadevataam dhyayedyaddhyaanam gurubhaashitam.*

*Yasya devasya yadroopam yathaa bhooshanavaahanam;
Tadroopam dhyayate nityam sthooladhyaanamidam viduh.*

Focus the attention on the heart. Contemplate a vast ocean filled with nectar. In the middle there is an island full of precious jewels and the sand is made of crushed gems. On all four sides there are neepa trees laden with flowers. Surrounding these trees, like trenches on the island, are rows of flowering trees such as malati, mallika, jati, kesara, champaka, parijata and padma, and their fragrance spreads to every corner of the island.

In the middle of the island a tree by the name of kalpa vriksha exists. Its four branches represent the four Vedas. This tree is laden with beautiful fruits and flowers. All over the island the melodious voice of the cuckoo (*kokila*) and the humming sound of the black honeybee are heard.

There is a terrace with a throne decorated with precious gems. Contemplate your ishta devata sitting on that throne. Meditate on your chosen deity according to the technique taught by your guru. Focus with one-pointedness on that form and various items like the clothing, mala, etc., that your ishta is wearing. With this technique, learned people constantly meditate on the gross or physical form of the divine or their guru. (2–8)

With this technique the direction given is to meditate on the heart. It has been said in the Upanishads that God resides in the heart space, *hridayakasha*. Many saints and sages also say to search in one's heart. Whom does one search for in the heart? Who is God? The one who is sitting in *kshera sagara*, the milky ocean, is Narayana. Now anahata chakra needs to be understood. The tattwa of anahata chakra is *vayu*, the air element, but it relates directly to the space element, *akasha*, and *anahad nada*, unstruck sound. Anahad nada is heard in the form of the sound *Aum* or *Om*. The external form



Anahata chakra

of the sound *Aum* is the humming sound of the bee. The humming sound of the bee is manifesting here, and that island made of jewels is full of those *nada* vibrations, which are the abode of God. These jewels are the *gunas* or qualities of a human being.

Thus, that place which is totally pure and sacred, where there is no illusion or impurity, has been visualized here within anahata, and it has been said that the Lord resides in anahata. The sage has used this image to explain the form of the Lord. In that milky ocean, the chosen deity, *ishta devata*, who has created one, and the guru, who has imparted knowledge, are sitting. The ocean also represents the endless infinite; the ocean and space hint at infinity.

After pratyahara and dharana, when a state of meditation is entered and the consciousness or awareness is continuously moving without obstruction, one has gone beyond some of the mental states. Only after crossing them is this continuity attained. Even if all the states have been overcome, the awareness has now become continuous. The mental fluctuations and impressions which divert and drive the mind away from one-pointedness have ended.

When there is complete concentration on one point, the state of one-pointedness is experienced. Anahad nada is then experienced in the form of the humming sound of the black bee. The inner eye of knowledge is opened, and with the opening of inner vision, one starts observing the kalpa vriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree, which has four branches: the four Vedas. All material and spiritual knowledge is contained in these four Vedas.

When the free or liberated nature begins to be recognized, and the inner qualities begin to be observed, that knowledge, perception and awareness awakens the intuitive eye from which past, present and future are not concealed. All knowledge is clearly and vividly seen in the form of the Vedas. In this state the mind should be focused on the Lord or on the image of the guru, as the focus of sthoola dhyana is the image or *murti*.

This technique has been given here for a specific purpose, so that there is no boost to the ego in this state of dhyana, no feeling that 'I have achieved'. One's focus is on the divine essence, *Ishwara tattwa*, in the form of guru or on a form of God, so that the knowledge that it is His gift is maintained. *Naaham kartaa Harih kartaa, Hari kartaa hi kewalam*, I am not the doer, He is the doer. Only the Lord is the doer.

What does *Gheranda Samhita* say about the experience of *shoonya*, the void?

When the gunas are crossed, a state arises called *shoonya avastha*, the void state. However, that *shoonya avastha* is not the real *shoonya avastha* in the sattwic sense, for activity is still taking place there; there are vibrations – nada and experience exist. It has been termed *shoonya*, void, as different dimensions of the personality have been crossed, according to one's knowledge. Even the gunas can be known; one has crossed the gunas or qualities. After this, the region that is attained is unknown as it has not been described anywhere, nor can it be described, it can only be experienced.

The experience, therefore, has been called *shoonya avastha*. Yoga, however, maintains that it is not void. Yoga says that vibrations, activity, experience and light also exist in this state.

Sage Gheranda says that meditating in this *shoonya avastha* on the brilliant, limitless existence, Brahman, Supreme Soul or self, is called *jyoti dhyana*, meditation on light. He describes two forms: *tejo dhyana* and *pranava dhyana* in *Gheranda Samhita* (6:16–17)

*Moolaadhaare kundalinee bhujangaakaararoopinee;
Tatra tishthati jeevaatmaa pradeepakalikaakritih;
Dhyaayettejomayam brahma tejodhyaanam paraatparam.*

*Bhroovormadhye manaoordhve yattejah pranavaatmakam;
Dhyaayejjvaalaavaleeyuktam tejodhyaanam tadeva hi.*

In mooladhara, kundalini exists in the form of a serpent. The soul (*jivatma*) resides here in the form of the flame of a lamp. Meditating here on the luminous Supreme Soul itself is tejo dhyana, i.e. *jyoti dhyana*. (16)

The *jyoti* or flame exists in between the two eyebrows and in the upper portion of the mind. Meditating on that blazing flame itself is called *tejo dhyana*. (17)



Mooladhara chakra

According to Sage Gheranda, not only is kundalini shakti sleeping in the form of a serpent in mooladhara, but the soul of the human being resides in the same place in the form of the flame of a lamp. The instruction is to meditate on this form of the soul in mooladhara. From the viewpoint of the elements, mooladhara chakra is a symbol of the earth element, the final development of creation.

Everyone lives within the attraction of the earth element. The earth element is neither this land nor this planet, nor is it soil, sand or stones. The whole of creation is in the form of the earth element, irrespective of what it is called, along with different states of life. That consciousness which people call *jivatma* or the individual self is only manifest within the earth element. Therefore, meditating on the light of the individual soul in the earth element – that is, meditating on the higher self in the final state of creation – is called *tejo dhyana*.

Just as there is a difference between a bulb and its light or the sun and its light, in exactly the same manner there is a difference between the self and the experience of the self. The sun is a centre and the light that emanates from the sun pervades everything. The light of electricity is produced by the bulb, but that light pervades the whole room, it does not remain confined to the bulb.

Both are integrated; without the bulb there is no light and without light the bulb has no meaning, but still there is a difference between the two. The centre is at one point, but its light is everywhere. Hence, that expansion or comprehensiveness, and experiencing and observing the form of the self within the range of experiences that are had in that comprehensiveness, is one method of *jyoti dhyana*.

The second method of *jyoti dhyana* is *bhroovormadhye manaurdhve cha yattejah pranavaatmakam*. *Pranava*, the mantra *Om* or *Aum*, full of light, is located beyond the brain in the eyebrow centre. *Dhyaayejjvaalaavaleeyuktam tejodhyaanam tadeva hi*, this *pranava* is the symbol of the soul or self. Meditation on this bright illuminating light is known as *pranava dhyana*.

Earlier it was said that the soul resides in mooladhara. Now it is said that the soul lives in the eyebrow centre, *bhrumadhya*. How can it be in two places? Sage Gheranda says the soul has two forms. One is the external manifest form, which is in the earth element. The other is the unmanifest form, which is in the eyebrow centre or in ajna. Ajna chakra symbolizes the pure state, the pure nature or pure consciousness. It is only after reaching this state that the different *tattwas* and *bhootas*, or elements, are experienced.

So the soul which is in mooladhara is manifest and the light of the soul can be experienced in that centre. The soul also resides in ajna chakra; there one can know the experience of the soul in the supreme region, *para kshetra*. Both *para*, transcendental, and *apara*, lower, states are being discussed here. Both these *lokas*, planes or states, are absolutely full of the light of the soul.

The soul which is in mooladhara is in the form of kundalini and the soul which is in bhrumadhya, the eyebrow centre, is in the form of God or *Aum*. When meditation is performed on both these centres, perfection is achieved in yogic science. In the state of void, shoonya avastha, when only the light of the higher self is experienced without seeing worldly matter and sensorial objects, there is the experience of vibration or nada, sound.

When the region within reach of *para nada*, transcendental sound, is entered, it is called the region of light or flame, and as one comes closer to the apex, one becomes capable of hearing the root vibrations.

According to *Gheranda Samhita* can self-realization be attained through dhyana?

The third and highest form of dhyana given in *Gheranda Samhita* (6:18–22) is sukshma dhyana:

*Tejodhyaanam shrutam chanda sookshmadhyaanam shrinushva me;
Bahubhaagyavashaadyasya kundalee jaagratee bhavet.*

*Aatmanaa saha yogena netrarandhraadvinirgataa;
Viharedraajamaarge cha chanchalatvaanna drishyate.*

*Shaambhavee mudrayaa yogo dhyaanayogena sidhyati;
Sookshmadhyaanamidam gopyam devaanaamapi durlabham.*

*Sthooladhyanaachchhatagunam tejodhyaanam prachakshate;
tejodhyanaaallakshagunam sookshmadhyaanam paraatparam.*

*Iti te kathitam chanda dhyaanayogam sudurlabham;
Aatmasaakshaadbhavedyasmaattasmaaddhyaanam vishishyate.*

O Chanda, you have heard about tejo dhyana (jyoti dhyana), now I shall describe sukshma dhyana. If by great good fortune the kundalini shakti is awakened, it unites with the atma or soul, rises above the eye sockets and travels the raja marga, but it is not seen due to its subtleness and restlessness. (18–19)

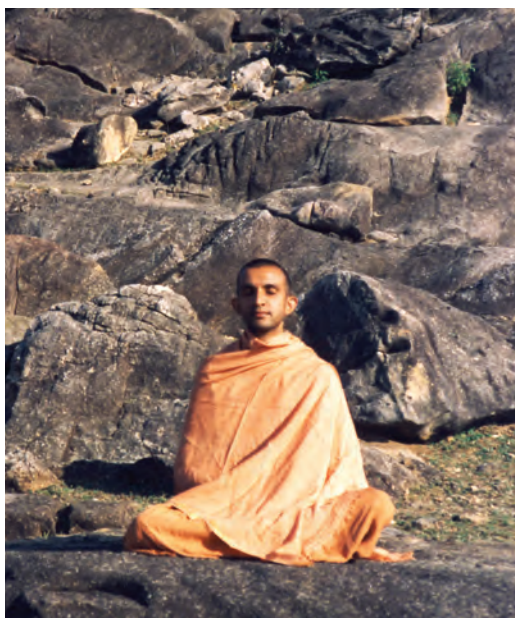
Practising shambhavi mudra, a yogi should meditate (on kundalini). This is called sukshma dhyana, which is extremely secret and is not accessible even to the gods. (20)

Jyoti dhyana is one hundred times superior to sthoola dhyana and sukshma dhyana is one hundred thousand times superior to jyoti dhyana. O Chanda! I have told you about this extremely non-accessible dhyana yoga. One attains self-realization by perfecting supreme meditation. (21–22)

While describing the technique of *sukshma dhyana*, Sage Gheranda says that if a *sadhaka* or practitioner is fortunate enough, it is possible to unite with the soul or self by practising this meditation. With the awakening of *kundalini*, one's consciousness is united with the limitless existence. When one's self merges with the higher self, no difference remains between oneself and the soul.

The meaning of *sukshma* here is not the normal meaning of 'subtle'. *Sukshma dhyana* means the real meditation. Now there is no interval or space. Now there is no distance or difference. Now I am not meditating on the light, but I have already attained that centre from where it originated. When I attain that centre, then *moksha*, liberation, and *jnana*, knowledge, are achieved.

This meditation has not been described in detail as once a person reaches that state, there is no need for description. It is only said that on reaching this meditation one attains self-realization, becoming one with the soul or higher self.



5

Hatha Yoga and Higher Consciousness

PREPARATION FOR HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

What is the process in hatha yoga which leads to higher states of consciousness?

Swami Sivananda: Hatha yoga is an extremely important yoga. The first step in hatha yoga is to practise the *shatkarmas*, six techniques which purify the physical body. After these, the yoga postures and pranayamas are practised. When practice of these is established, the bandhas are introduced. Next, concentration of the mind is practised. After success is achieved in concentration of the mind, the practitioner should concentrate on the *chakras*, or psychic centres. After this, mudras which are important for the awakening of kundalini, are practised. Finally, through the practice of hatha yoga, one can stop the mind completely.

Why is hatha yoga essential preparation for higher states of consciousness?

Swami Satyananda: One's whole being, starting from the physical body, has to be refined and strengthened so that it can act as a medium for the higher cosmic force. Therefore, the system of hatha yoga was designed to transform the gross elements of the body so that they can receive and transmit a much subtler and more powerful energy.

If the body is not prepared for this higher form of energy, it would be like running two hundred volts of electricity into a machine which only has the capacity to use six volts. The machine would definitely burn out. Hatha yoga systematically prepares the body, mind and emotions, so that there are no difficulties when the aspirant is undergoing higher states of consciousness.

HATHA YOGA AND THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Does hatha yoga use asanas for the evolution of consciousness?

Swami Satyananda: Asanas were used to evolve the consciousness from the lowest to the highest state. Some asanas imitate the shapes of a bow, a boat, trees, the lotus, reptiles, fish, the foetus, birds, saints like Vasishtha and gods such as Nataraja. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:18) it is written:

*Vashishthaadyaishcha munibhirmatsyendraadyaishcha yogibhih.
Angeekritaanyaasanaani kathyante kaanichinmayaa.*

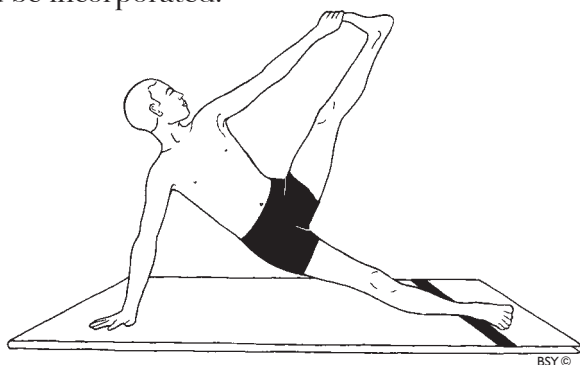
I will proceed to describe some of the asana accepted by munis such as Vasishtha and yogis such as Matsyendranath.

The yogic tradition says that in all, there are eighty four lakh (8,400,000) of asanas – that is, there are as many asanas as forms of life. No wonder Yogi Swatmarama says he is only going to describe “some” of the asanas! In the yogic texts the maximum number of asanas described is thirty three. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Yogi Swatmarama describes those asanas which are essential and which were performed by the founders of hatha yoga.

It is interesting that he should describe asanas practised by munis such as Sage Vasishtha. It is natural that he would discuss those performed by Yogi Matsyendranath as he is the founder of this hatha yoga system. Vasishtha, however, was a

jnana yogi, so it can be assumed that he would have mainly used sitting and meditative postures rather than the more dynamic asanas. By mentioning Vasishtha he makes it clear that even those concerned with contemplation and higher wisdom realized the necessity of yoga asanas. It also implies that the influence of asanas is more than physical. If saints such as Vasishtha were able to become honoured as jnanis, asanas must also be beneficial in the development of higher wisdom.

This sloka infers that whether one is specifically practising hatha or any other form of yoga, asana is important and should be incorporated.



Vasisthasana

How does hatha yoga activate one's higher brain centres?

Swami Satyananda: Just as there are two poles of energy, the negative and positive forces, there are two poles of individual consciousness. The left hemisphere of the brain is associated with logic and linearity while the right hemisphere of the brain is associated with creativity. When these two opposite poles are both activated there is a higher awakening. Hatha yoga accomplishes this by uniting the two poles of shakti, the passive and the dynamic forces known as *ida* and *pingala*. This creates a third force, known as *kundalini*.

It is the potential spiritual energy in a human which is responsible for the higher qualities of the mind. This energy, or *shakti* is created in the lower body centres and rises to the higher brain centres, thus manifesting the

pure consciousness. When this ascent takes place, the finite awareness operating through the senses and the sensory experiences ceases to function. The poles of duality no longer exist as they have been united; only the higher awareness exists. This is called emancipation.

The raja and dhyana yogis aim to achieve this through concentration of mind, but the hatha yogi achieves it by uniting the pranas, whereby the mind automatically becomes still. The hatha yogi does not have to come into confrontation with the gross tendencies of the lower mind. Instead, the mind is transcended by concentrating on the physical aspect of prana. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:49) it is stated:

*Padmaasanesthito yogee naadeedvaarena pooritam.
Maarutam dhaarayedyastu sa muktonaatra samshayah.*

The yogi who, seated in padmasana, inhales through the entrances of the nadis and fills them with *maruta*, or vital air, gains liberation; there is no doubt about it.

Liberation is not a religious word. It indicates a scientific process of uniting two opposite forces. When these opposite forces combine, an explosion occurs which releases potential energy. In tantra the forces are called Shiva and Shakti; in yoga, prana and chitta; in Samkhya, purusha and prakriti; in Vedanta, Brahman and jiva; and in physics, time and space.

These two forces cannot meet at just any point, they must unite in the nucleus of matter. When the opposite forces of shakti unite in mooladhara or manipura chakra, then the explosion which occurs releases the potential energy from that centre. Science has shown that when time and space meet in the nucleus of matter, that matter explodes into thousands and thousands of particles. This is the basis of creation. It is how each and every one of us was born, and by the same process the potential consciousness can be liberated from the gross mind.

All living matter is the combination of two forces, prana and consciousness. The evolution of the body causes

consciousness to become more apparent. In this world it is the human being who has come closest to developing pure consciousness. Through the 'fire of yoga' the consciousness can be liberated from the gross matter of mind and body. This is the experience of *atma anubhuti*, *atma darshan*, *moksha*, *samadhi* or self-realization. No matter what it is called, it is one and the same process which commences with the practice of asana and the perfection of a comfortable meditative posture such as padmasana.

ATTAINMENTS THROUGH HATHA YOGA

How does hatha yoga develop one's psychic awareness?

Swami Satyananda: Yoga asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas, and kriyas tend to develop one's psychic awareness. One's behaviour, reactions, interpretations, tolerance, even one's so-called natural responses are based on glandular and cellular secretions of which we are unaware. Development of the pituitary brings about a different state of thinking; thyroid secretions have their own influence on the emotional personality; the presence or absence, the potency or impotency of sex hormones influences one's physical mental and spiritual aspects.

Therefore, the scientific attitude towards yoga asanas and pranayamas should recognize that they develop psychic awareness by control, purification and harmonization of these secretions. They manipulate the secret workings of the body's glands.

What is the effect of increased shakti?

Swami Satyananda: As one proceeds further in the practice of hatha yoga, control over the prana develops and symptoms manifest due to the awakening of kundalini. By increasing the shakti in every chakra, greater mental and psychic capacity is developed, and the consciousness is able to move freely in the subtle realms of existence.

Experiences which normally take place through the senses, can then take place directly through the mind. One can smell without the nose, see without the eyes, speak without the mouth and tongue, taste without the tongue, feel without the hands and skin, and hear without the ears. Shakti has two characteristics – frequency and form. When the shakti in the body is activated and increased, the consciousness becomes attuned to the frequency, and an audible sound is heard. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:20) it states:

*Yatheshtandhaaranam vaayoranalasya pradeepanam;
Naadaabhivyaktiraarogyam jaayate naadishodhanaat.*

When one is able to hold vayu (pranic air) according to one's will, the digestive power increases. With the nadis purified, thus the inner sound or nada awakens and one is free from disease.

That sound is known as nada and it becomes apparent in the later stages of yoga when the mind is totally concentrated.

Can hatha yoga awaken siddhis?

Swami Satyananda: As one practises hatha yoga techniques, one's physical and mental potential begins to increase and unfold. We know that man uses only a small proportion of his total mental capacity. This means that the remainder lies dormant, waiting to be brought into action. The dormant brain has been called the 'silent area'. Little is known about its capacity, but neurologists suggest it has something to do with one's psychic capacity.

After long and arduous practise of yoga, the psychic potential manifests, maybe in the form of clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, telekinesis and psychic healing. These are called *siddhis*, or perfections. Some people regard them as a grand achievement, but they are only temporary manifestations which can even hinder further spiritual progress.

Can siddhis be attained through the perfection of mudras?

Swami Satyananda: The perfection of asana and pranayama result in minor siddhis or perfections, such as vitality, good health, mental and emotional equilibrium, and clairaudience. Perfection of mudras and bandhas, however, results in the attainment of major siddhis such as *anima* (making the body small like an atom), *laghima* (making the body light), *mahima* (making the body large), *garima* (making the body heavy), *prapti* (capacity to reach anywhere), *prakamya* (unobstructed fulfillment of desire), *vahsitva* (control over all objects) and *ishitva* (power to create and destroy). In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:8) Yogi Swatmarama says of mudras:

*Aadinaathoditam divyamashtaishvaryapradaayakam;
Vallabham sarvasiddhaanaam durlabham marutaamapi.*

Adinath said they are the bestowers of the eight divine powers. They are held in high esteem by all the siddhas (perfected ones) and are difficult for even the gods to attain.

The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali also lists these eight siddhis, referring to them as *ashta siddhi*. However, Sage Patanjali emphasizes that siddhis should not be sought and, if they develop, they should virtually be ignored and definitely not exhibited.

According to him, they are obstacles on the path to samadhi and can completely hinder one's spiritual evolution. Therefore, although mudras and bandhas can bestow divine powers, they should not be practised for this purpose.

Why is it said that siddhis can become a problem?

Swami Satyananda: Although regular practice of hatha yoga can bring about many wonderful changes and desired results, it is essential to remember that they are only side effects. Hatha yoga is not being taught for its own sake, for therapeutic purposes, or for gaining worldly or psychic

powers, and this is something the hatha yoga practitioner should always keep in mind.

The goal of all yogic sadhana is to discover and experience the universal spirit within, and if siddhis are indulged in they take one away from the ultimate experience. Therefore, they are better ignored as they are not the desired fruit of hatha yoga.

Does the practice of neti awaken ajna chakra?

Swami Niranjanananda: With the practice of neti, the brain becomes calm and quiet. As a result, stress and lethargy are removed. The practice of neti is also beneficial when the brain is excited or agitated. With regard to the spiritual benefit of neti kriya, it is said that the practice awakens ajna chakra.

With the awakening of ajna chakra, the mind becomes calm; there is the experience of one-pointedness and the attainment of concentration. One's actions can be properly understood. It is said that by the practice of neti, the third eye is opened.

HATHA YOGA PRACTICES AND HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

Can asanas bring about the experience of union?

Swami Sivananda: Yoga means union, the union of the individual soul, *jivatma* with the Supreme Soul, *paramatma*. *Asana* is an easy and comfortable pose or posture. Therefore, the term yoga 'asanas' means postures by which the yoga practitioner can unite the individual soul with the Supreme Soul quite easily. The relationship between mind and body is so complete and subtle that it is no wonder that physical training induces mental transformation.

How does trataka help in the expansion of consciousness?

Swami Satyananda: The practice of trataka is important. When trataka is practised one develops a vision without

an object. This requires a greater capacity of mind. After all, sensory objects are not the only reality: one must stop and think again – is there nothing existing beyond all this? Is there no form behind the form? Is there no sound behind the sound? Yes there is, and that experience can be lasting.

It is clearly stated in the Upanishads that sensory experiences are limited by time, space and *maya*, illusion; only when the barrier of sensorial experiences is crossed can one come to a deeper reality. This is also the premise of modern psychology. The highest experiences emanate from the unconscious, and the lower spring from *maya*. The practice of *trataka*, therefore, is of great relevance in the expansion of consciousness.

How does *trataka* help one attain higher states?

Swami Satyananda: Concentration is the essence of *trataka*, and it is through powerful concentration that one makes progress in yoga.

What is concentration? It is one-pointedness of mind, the ability to hold, to focus the attention on one point, without wavering. Perfect concentration leads to meditation. In meditation practices, such as *trataka*, concentration leads to complete mental attention on one object, form or thought to the exclusion of all others. There is no distraction from the environment or other peripheral things.

In a laser beam all the rays of light from a source are lined up so that they are in unison, so that they vibrate together in perfect harmony. The original source of light need not be great, not even as great as the average light bulb filament, yet if a person stood five feet away from a laser source, the beam would almost instantaneously burn a hole straight through that person's body. This is the power of concentrated light.

Concentrated thought also has vast power. A concentrated mind acts as an irresistible instrument of action: it leads to efficiency in one's activities in the outside world and is a

dynamo which generates vitality and enthusiasm in every direction.

A concentrated mind also has the ability to be a sensitive receiving instrument. It becomes receptive to higher vibrations, to heightened perception. It becomes a receiver of the influx of higher awareness, bliss and knowledge. This is normally beyond the range of the average mind, which is too disturbed and distracted by its continual inner chatter. Concentration is the key that will unlock the door to higher states of awareness.

Why is pranayama important in spiritual life?

Swami Niranjanananda: When one is identified with the senses, there is identification with the lower level of the personality. The higher level of personality, beyond the senses, is the mind. Realize that. Higher than mind is the intellect, *viveka buddhi*, the discriminative faculty. Realize that. Higher than the discriminative ability is the still and silent nature of the self, which is the *atma*. This is written in the *Bhagavad Gita*, (3:42) when Sri Krishna states:

*Indriyaani paraanyaahuh indriyebhyah param manah
Manasastu paraa buddhiryo buddheh paratastu sah.*

The senses are said to be superior to the body; superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect; and superior even to the intellect is the *atma*, the inner spirit.

If one is to move from the realm of the senses to the realm of the inner spirit, one must harmonize the body, which is the experiencer of the senses. The body is controlled by prana; the senses are controlled by prana. Therefore, ensure that you practise pranayama.

How does pranayama lead to the awakening of sushumna?

Swami Niranjanananda: Human evolution depends on the awakening of prana shakti, as much as it depends on

optimum health of the body. The awakening of prana takes place when the nadis flow regularly, rhythmically and continuously, and no blockages or physiological discomfort is encountered in the breathing process. This stage is known as *pranotthana*, awakening of the pranas, more specifically of ida and pingala.

When the ida and pingala awaken, sushumna awakens. The awakening of this third force is considered the most important event in pranayama, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. Pranayama actually begins with the awakening of sushumna, as the pranic field then expands. Until this awakening occurs, the purification of ida and pingala continues throughout the practices.

Such an awakening of pranic energy indicates the evolution of pranamaya kosha, whereby one is able to go deep into and become established in the higher meditative states.

How does pranayama create spiritual transformation?

Swami Niranjanananda: Pranayama initiates a process in the physical body whereby the energy and the mental forces which interact with one another in life and consciousness are transformed. When the ‘molecules’ of mind are transformed, higher qualities such as love, compassion and unity arise. When the yogic texts state that through pranayama one can control one’s circumstances and character, and harmonize the individual life with cosmic life, they are referring to the power of pranayama to bring about such an intrinsic transformation.

The aspirant who practises pranayama in a sustained manner finds that, gradually, there is an impact on every aspect of his being, at every level. Impurities are removed not only from the physical and pranic bodies, but also from the mental, psychic and causal bodies. As a result, the intellectual capacity increases, and the mind and thoughts become more powerful. As prana flows freely through all the levels of being, the negative tendencies begin to drop off almost automatically.

The small things that could earlier spin one out of control dissolve into nothing, and the connection with and experience of cosmic prana becomes stronger and steadier.

The main objective of pranayama is to balance the interacting processes of the pranic and mental forces for awakening the higher centres of human consciousness.

How can pranayama take one into higher dimensions?

Swami Niranjanananda: The practices of pranayama develop the quality of human consciousness and should be adopted with this attitude. Control over the mind is achieved by regular and systematic practice, so that one is able to handle the involuntary processes of the body, brain and mind. This means that one becomes the master of oneself and one's destiny. At the physical level, the high pressure and stimulation exerted on the nervous system during the practices of pranayama cause the consciousness to be internalized, so that supersensory perceptions become possible. Once the physical structure is changed, the mental substance automatically undergoes a change.

At the pranic level, the awakening of prana shakti becomes a bridge to cross over from the gross to subtle experience of yoga. Planes of consciousness that had previously remained in darkness are illumined as prana flows into them. The practitioner is able to penetrate these higher dimensions of existence experientially. The *anahad nada*, subtle inner sounds, are heard distinctly and the mind evaporates at this time. The practitioner of pranayama does not have to fight with the wild and untamed mind; it becomes calm and controlled by itself.

As prana circulates into the dark areas of the brain and mind, one's evolution is catalyzed and a higher intelligence manifests. The kundalini is awakened and the practitioner does not need to learn meditation. The meditative state arises by itself, and a new realm of consciousness opens. One is born into a radiant area of experience; such is the great science of pranayama.

How does the symbolism of jnana and chin mudras represent the evolution of consciousness?

Swami Niranjanananda: The word *jnana* means 'wisdom' or 'knowledge', and thus jnana mudra is the gesture of intuitive knowledge. *Chin*, on the other hand, is derived from the word *chit* or *chitta*, which means 'consciousness'. Chin mudra, therefore, is the psychic gesture of consciousness.



Jnana Mudra



Chin Mudra

Symbolically, the middle, ring and small fingers represent the three qualities of nature. The middle finger symbolizes *sattwa*: purity, wisdom, true understanding; the ring finger *rajas*: action, passion, movement; and the little finger *tamas*: inertia, lethargy, darkness. These three states or gunas have to be transcended – from *tamas* to *rajas* to *sattwa* – in order to pass from darkness into light and from ignorance to knowledge.

The bent index finger represents *jivatma*, the individual manifestation of consciousness. The thumb signifies *paramatma*, the all-pervading consciousness or reality. The index finger and the thumb touching each other shows that, though they seem separate, the individual being is in fact one with the Supreme.

How does akashi mudra lead to higher states of consciousness?

Swami Niranjanananda: Akashi mudra combines the benefits of kumbhaka, ujjayi, shambhavi and kechari. It induces calmness and tranquillity, and develops control over the senses. When perfected, it arrests the thought processes and leads to higher states of consciousness.

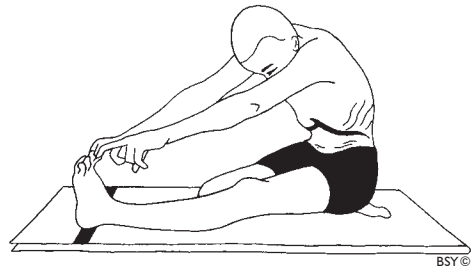
What are the subtle effects of maha bheda mudra?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Bheda* or *bedha* means ‘to pierce’. Just as the beads of a *mala*, rosary, are pierced with a needle in order to thread them, in exactly the same manner the seven chakras are pierced by this practice. Sage Gheranda and Yogi Swatmarama have described it under hatha yoga, but one version of maha mudra is also a practice of kriya yoga.

Maha bheda mudra has a profound influence at a pranic level. It specifically influences mooladhara, manipura and vishuddhi chakras, manipulating and harnessing the energies within them to induce concentration of mind and meditation. Maha bheda mudra supplements and follows maha mudra; together they supercharge the whole body-mind complex which enables a powerful flow at the physical, mental and pranic levels. There is circulation of fresh energy in the body, mind and senses. Consciousness becomes extremely subtle and deep.

The chakras are pierced in these practices. This piercing is through consciousness. In each chakra there is a state of prana and also a state of consciousness which is as yet unknown to the practitioner. In every chakra there is a state of consciousness which in common language is called an expanded form of consciousness.

In mooladhara, the form of consciousness reflects the qualities of mooladhara; in swadhisthana, the consciousness takes a swadhisthana form; just so in manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna – the form of consciousness relates to each particular chakra. Thus one moves through the sequential development of consciousness, experiencing new forms of consciousness at each progression. The idea is to traverse each state while maintaining one’s present awareness and state of perception.



Maha Bheda Mudra

The most important principle of kundalini yoga is that while crossing all the chakras or psychic centres, the awareness, the consciousness and the state of perception should remain the same. This state of perception is one-pointed, the end of being scattered. It can be called an 'unscattered mind', where there is no dissipation or deflection. It is a fully focused and one-pointed state, in which the mind is not influenced by any quality. This is the basic form of consciousness. The chakras, or psychic centres, should be pierced by this one-pointed state.

One of the main benefits of this mudra is to achieve a high state of consciousness while maintaining awareness of consciousness in a normal form. This is the aim and purpose of maha bheda mudra. Maha bheda enables yogis to become siddhas, perfect and knowledgeable. A person who does all three practices of moola bandha, maha bandha, and maha bheda mudra daily, is known as a *yogavit*, or yoga specialist.

Why is shambhavi mudra such a highly regarded practice?

Swami Niranjanananda: Shambhavi mudra is an extraordinary practice. In *Gheranda Samhita* (3:76–79) it is thus praised:

*Netraantaram samaalokya chaatmaaraamam nireekshayet;
Saa bhavetchchhaambhaveemudraa sarvatantreshugopitaa.*

*Vedashastrapuraanaani saamaanyaganikaa iva;
Iyam tu shaambhaveemudraa guptaa kulavadhooriva.*

*Sa evahyaadinaathashcha sa cha naaraayanah svayam;
Sa cha brahmaa srishtikaaree yo mudraam veti shaambhaveem.*

*Satyam satyam punah satyam satyamaaha maheshvarah;
Shaambhaveem yo vijaaneeyaatsa cha brahma na chaanyathaa.*

Steady the gaze at the eyebrow centre on the atma, and meditate. This is shambhavi mudra. It is a very secret tantric practice. (76)

The Vedas, shastras and puranas are like an ordinary woman and shambhavi mudra is like a bride. (77)

Practitioners of this practice are themselves Adinath Narayana and Brahma, the creator of this world. (78)

Take this saying as absolutely true, that a person knowing shambhavi mudra is Maheshwara, is Brahman in reality. (79)

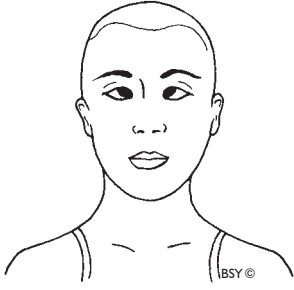
So few people know of shambhavi mudra, that Sage Gheranda describes it by using the simile of a bride from a well-to-do family who is carefully guarded and protected, while the status of ordinary women is compared to the Vedas, puranas and shastras – scriptures which everyone knows. Thus, for Sage Gheranda, shambhavi mudra occupies an even higher place than the Vedas, puranas and shastras.

In this mudra one meditates on *atma roopi Ishwara*, God in the form of the soul or spirit, uniting the individual soul with the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha, merging with the trinity and becoming one with them. Sage Gheranda considers a practitioner of shambhavi mudra to be *Mahesha* (also known as Lord Shiva or Shambhu), *Vishnu* (also known as Narayana) and *Brahma* (the creator of this universe). He emphasizes, *satyam satyam punah satyam satyamaaha maheshvarah*, that a person who has attained perfection in shambhavi mudra is truly an incarnation of the Lord.

Shambhavi mudra is, therefore, a process of psychic union and a meditative practice leading to a state of enlightenment.

What are the effects of shambhavi mudra on the mind?

Swami Niranjanananda: Shambhavi mudra leads to control over the mind and prana. It develops concentration, mental stability and the state of thoughtlessness. With practice, the mind becomes capable of spiritual contemplation and absorption. In kundalini yoga it is a powerful practice to awaken ajna chakra, the centre which unites the lower



Shambhavi mudra

consciousness with the higher consciousness. If perfection is achieved in this practice, then the experience of God in the form of the individual soul is bound to come. *Gheranda Samhita* advises that the *pancha dharana*, five concentrations, should then be practised, leading a practitioner to gain control over the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space,

which come under *pancha tattwa dharana*.

Why does Sage Gheranda recommend the practice of shambhavi mudra before success in the *pancha dharana* series can be attained? He does not say, but a hint can be obtained from the relevant verses in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:36–37), which teaches shambhavi mudra, but not the *pancha dharana* series:

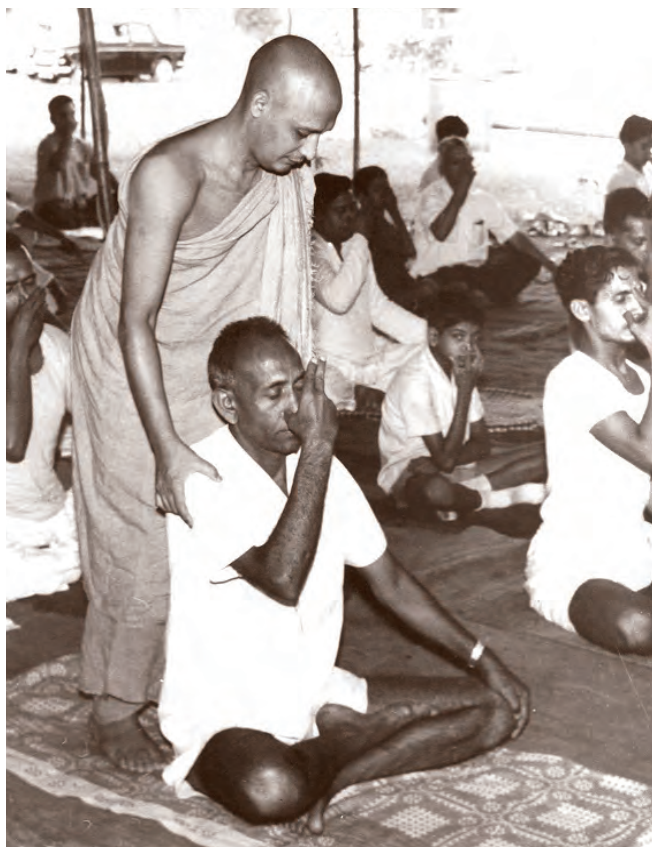
*Antarlakshyam bahirdrishtirnimeshonmeshavarjitaa;
Eshaa saa shaambhavee mudraa vedashaastreshu gopitaa.*

*Antarlakshyavileenachittapavano yogee yadaa vartate;
Drishtyaa nishchalataarayaa bahiradhaah pashyannapashyannapi.
Mudreyam khalu shaambhavee bhavati saa labdhaa prasaadaad-
guroh;
Shoonyaashoonyavilakshanam sphurati tattattvam padam
shaambhavam.*

Introverted, one-pointed awareness with an unblinking external gaze, this is shambhavi mudra which is preserved in the Vedas. (36)

If the yogi remains with the awareness and energy absorbed in the internal object (for concentration) while the (external) gaze is motionless, though looking one is not looking, that indeed is shambhavi. When it is given with the guru's blessing, the state of shoonyashoonya arises. That is the real state of Shiva (consciousness). (37)

Thus, the practice of shambhavi mudra turns the focus of awareness to the divine. Another point to consider is that Shambhavi is one of the names of Parvati, Lord Shiva's consort and disciple. According to the story, only one thinking process is present in Parvati – that although she may have to take many births, she must always have Shiva's company. The same thought existed when she took birth as Sati. It was expressed by Parvati at the time of her *tapasya*, austerities, that she would not be defeated, even if she had to take birth time and again – every time, it is her wish to attain the Shiva element.



6

Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

SAMADHI IN HATHA YOGA

How can hatha yoga lead to samadhi?

Swami Sivananda: Shatkarma kriyas, asanas, pranayama, mudras, bandhas and exercises in concentration and meditation constitute hatha yoga, which leads to the awakening of the kundalini shakti and ultimate union with God in samadhi.

How does hatha yoga describe the experience of samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: Samadhi is the culmination of hatha yoga and raja yoga. The word *samadhi* is made up of two roots, *sama* which means 'equal' and *dhi* which is 'reflection' or 'to perceive'. The word samadhi does not indicate liberation but it is a field of awareness comprising supraconsciousness. It is the result of total one-pointedness of mind and expansion of consciousness from the mundane perception to that of cosmic awareness. It is the final experience of every human being and the one that all are evolving towards. Through yogic and tantric practices this process is accelerated. Just as scientists have developed the means to release nuclear energy from the uranium atom, similarly the yogis found the scientific system to release the energy and consciousness from the *bindu*, the nucleus, within the body. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:2) it is written:

*Athedaaneem pravakshyaami samaadhikramamuttamam.
Mrityudhnam cha sukhopaayam brahmaanandakaram param.*

Thus, I shall now expound the best process of samadhi which eliminates death and takes one to the greatest bliss of Brahma.

Samadhi is the experience of that which exists beyond temporal experience, which is beyond the influence of nature. It is a timeless state beyond birth, death, beginning and end. Samadhi starts with total concentration on the object of meditation, with no other thought and no awareness of the witness remaining.

Samadhi is neither trance nor ecstasy. Samadhi is that state of consciousness in which there is no fluctuation. A thought is a fluctuation, objective awareness is fluctuation, subjective awareness is fluctuation. A dream is fluctuation, a spiritual vision is fluctuation, psychic forms are fluctuation. The knowledge of 'I' in the depth of meditation is fluctuation. In deep meditation when one becomes unconscious of everything, that is also fluctuation. It is called *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*, thought and counter-thought, awareness and counter-awareness. *Hatharatnavali* (4:3) states that:

Dhyaanaadaspandamanasah samaadhih so'bhibheeyate.

When the mind becomes motionless as a result of (deep) concentration, that is called samadhi.

In the deepest mental states the *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* keep on taking place, but when *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* die, a state emerges called samadhi. Samadhi is either *savikalpa* or *nirvikalpa*: *savikalpa* is samadhi with *vikalpa*, counter-awareness; *nirvikalpa* is samadhi without any *vikalpa*. In *savikalpa* samadhi there is higher awareness but the four main types of *vikalpa* continue. These *vikalpas* are not like passion or fear, they are very slight modifications.

When samadhi begins, the consciousness moves beyond the awareness of the physical and pranic sheaths, *annamaya*

and *pranamaya koshas*, and abides in the mental sheath of *manomaya kosha*. Later, the awareness develops into *prajna*, intuition, in the sheath of the higher mind, *vijnanamaya kosha*. Then, transcendental awareness develops in the blissful sheath of *anandamaya kosha*, and ultimately moves beyond that. Samadhi is progressive, transcending the spheres of object, motion, thought and instinct. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:3) it is written:

*Samaadhim tam vijaaneeyaanmuktasanjno dashaadibhih.
Aham brahma na chaanyo'smi brahmaivaaham na shokabhaak;*

Detaching the mind from the body, one should make it one with the Paramatma. That is known as samadhi, which is not a state of any kind of consciousness as we understand this word.

Nirvikalpa or *nirbija*, seedless, samadhi is the disappearance of the last trace of samskaras and vikalpa. Individual consciousness is eliminated just as a fire which has consumed its fuel dies out. There is complete freedom from *karmas* and the *kleshas* (ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, clinging to life). There is no desire to become liberated, but nevertheless, *nirvana*, *kaivalya* or *moksha* ensues – that is timeless, changeless – the supreme samadhi.

How does the yogic tradition define samadhi?

Swami Niranananda: It is difficult to define samadhi, as everyone has used different words to describe it. The same states which Sage Patanjali called *nirbija*, *sabija*, etc., in *raja yoga* have been given other names by Sage Gheranda in *hatha yoga*, such as *laya siddhi samadhi* or *rasananda samadhi*. By considering the psychology of a human being, however, it can be inferred that these are progressive stages – one is a preliminary state of samadhi, leading to the next state, and so on.

When one's life is based on *nivritti marga*, the path of disassociation from the material world, worldly matters are

discarded by means of self-analysis and awareness. This allows mental and emotional development to take place inside so that a state of internal balance can be maintained. Gradually one starts to recognize one's real form, progressing further on that path, which culminates in the state of samadhi.

The final oblation or culmination is known as samadhi. Various practices, processes, techniques or sadhanas are used in order to achieve that state. From this point of view, the final limit of nivritti marga is samadhi, where one finally knows one's inner self.

How does hatha yoga interpret the union of Shiva and Shakti in samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:1) it says:

*Namah shivaaya gurave naadabindukalaatmane;
Niranjanapadam yaati nityam tatra paraayanah.*

Salutations to the Guru Shiva, who is regarded as nada, bindu and kala (sound, nucleus and emanating ray). One wholly devoted to them goes into the niranjana-pada, eternally stainless state.

Shiva and guru are synonymous terms indicating the existence of Supreme Consciousness and reality. It is within everybody and yet beyond every body and object. When that reality is realized, the inner guru or Shiva becomes known. Such a person is entitled to be called guru.

Salutations are first given here to Shiva, which could lead to the assumption that hatha yoga developed from a background of Shaivism. However, in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* there is a continual emphasis on absorbing the mind in prana shakti and later, kundalini is praised, revealing it to be a combination of Shaivite and Shakta philosophies (4:64):

*Sushumnaayai kundalinyai sudhaayai chandrajanmane;
Manonmanyai namastubhyam mahaashaktyai chidaatmane.*

Salutations to sushumna, kundalini, the nectar flowing from the moon, to the mindless state of mind (manonmani), to the great Shakti, to the atma.

According to tantra, consciousness or 'Shiva' cannot exist alone. Side by side with Shiva is the aspect of Shakti. Shiva or consciousness is inactive and inert. 'Shakti' is the active and changing aspect, and is actually none other than the reflection or energy of Shiva. In the scheme of creation whether manifest or potential, Shakti is the opposite polarity to Shiva.

Consciousness is the silent witness, shakti is the doer. The mid-point between these two 'polar tensions' is the bindu. When the two polarities meet in the *bindu* or nucleus, the nucleus is exploded and manifests *nada*, sound, and *kala*, emanating ray. Nada is the first manifestation of prana, the beginning of creation.

Bindu is both macrocosmic and microcosmic. The emergence of bindu is the evolution of the primordial shakti into manifestation of mind and matter. In the initial *maha bindu*, called Shiva, Brahman or Parameshwara, consciousness and shakti are not different but one. When movement or *spandana* takes place in shakti, the shiva *tattwa* or element and shakti *tattwa*, emerge as separate identities. When they unite, the 'thrill of the union' is nada.

The evolution of individual consciousness means bringing the 'stress' or the tension between the two polarities of Shiva and Shakti, time and space, or consciousness and prana, closer together. When they meet in the nucleus, the bindu, the total potential of consciousness and shakti explodes. Only then can the true experience of Shiva be attained.

From bindu, consciousness is expressed by means of shakti. When consciousness and prana meet in the nucleus of matter (mooladhara), bindu, kala and nada emerge. Kala is primal shakti, the power through which creation comes into manifestation, and the movement of prana in the physical body. Nada is the stream of consciousness flowing from the bindu to the object. By uniting these two within the

framework of our body and consciousness, one returns to the original bindu, shoonya. When that is attained, it is *moksha*, liberation.

How is the process of samadhi understood in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Shiva or purusha is the true state. The individual mind is but a transmutation of pure consciousness. In order for the individual consciousness to return to its original state the process of transmutation has to be retraced, or it can be said that a process of involution has to take place. In Hatha Yoga Pradipika (4:5–7) it says:

*Salile saindhavam yadvatsaamyam bhajati yogatah;
Tathaاتمamasoraikyam samaadhirabhidheeyate.*

*Yadaa sanksheeyate praano maanasam cha praleeyate;
Tadaa samarasatvam cha samaadhirabhidheeyate.*

*Tatsamam cha dvayoraikyam jeevaatmaparamaatmanoh;
Pranashtasarvasankalpah samaadhih so'bhidheeyate.*

As salt merges in the sea, likewise the mind and atma are considered united in samadhi. (5)

When the movement of prana is completely annihilated, then mind is reabsorbed and then samadhi is considered attained. (6)

When the twofold nature of the individual soul and cosmic soul becomes one, all desires and ideations are destroyed and that is considered samadhi. (7)

The individual mind is a combination of different elements. Therefore, in order to dissolve individual awareness, these elements have to be separated. The mind is said to be composed of the twenty-four elements: five jnanendriyas, five karmendriyas, five tanmatras, five tattwas and antah karana, i.e. chitta, buddhi, ahankara and manas. This means that perception through the senses has to be isolated from the mind, cognition of the tanmatras eliminated, manas

separated from chitta, chitta separated from buddhi, buddhi separated from ahamkara. Dissociation of each function has to occur. Only then can individual consciousness dissolve again into its pure source.

The elements of the individual mind merge with the universal mind in nirvikalpa samadhi. The *Avadhoota Gita* (1:51) states:

*Yathaa jalam jale nyastam salilam bhedavarjitam.
Prakritim purusham tadavadabhinnam pratibhaati me.*

Just as when water has been poured into water, no distinction remains, so purusha and prakriti appear non-different to me.

According to Vedanta, buddhi is the closest aspect of mind to atman. It receives information from manas, which in turn receives information from the *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and *jnanendriyas*, sense organs. If the information from the senses is cut off by pratyahara and the intellect is made to become still by dharana, only the shining atma remains. In yoga, the first step to samadhi is control of the sense impulses feeding the mind. The easiest method to achieve this is by control of the pranic flow.

Chitta shakti is responsible for *ichha*, desire, while prana shakti is responsible for *kriya*, action. When both these functions are arrested but awareness is maintained, pure knowledge remains. Therefore, in raja yoga it is essential for the body to become perfectly steady in asana, and for the practice of kumbhaka to be prolonged. During samadhi the body appears as if dead because the functions of prana, apana, samana and udana withdraw into vyana. In order to induce the state of samadhi the bandhas and mudras, and other practices were devised. In *Hatharatnavali* (4:2) it is stated that:

*Tatsamatvam bhavedatra jeevaatmaparamaatmanoh.
Samasta nashtasankalpah samaadhih so'bhidheeyate.*

In this stage (samadhi), jivatma and paramatma are held in the state of equilibrium, in which there is complete cessation of mental activity.

In order to fuse the individual mind with paramatma, the cause creating individuality has to be eradicated. Individuality occurs when *vritti*, fluctuation, and *vasana*, desire, exist in the mind. The more powerful the vasana, the less clarity of consciousness remains and the more the mind is drawn into the grosser modifications. Unless the mind is crystal clear, free from these influences, concentration, meditation and samadhi cannot take place.

The wavering tendencies of the vrittis have to be diminished. It is the condition of the mind to attach itself to an object. Thus, the fewer the objects it is attached to, the more one-pointed it becomes. The mind has to become as subtle and clear as crystal so that it reflects the paramatma and not the vrittis or vasanas.

Cosmic consciousness is always with us. But what is received by the higher brain is but a trickle of the total torrent of messages, just enough so that mundane awareness and biological survival is possible. In order to expand our limited state of perception, the normal range of brain functions has to be expanded by a safe and sure science. We should not consider this as a paranormal event. Just as it was considered a supernormal feat to voluntarily control the blood pressure but it is now an accepted phenomenon, so this expansion of awareness enabling 'extraordinary' communication is becoming re-known.

Can duality be overcome by merging ida and pingala nadis?

Swami Satyananda: The external sun and moon divide each twenty-four hours into night and day, and the internal moon and sun, *ida* and *pingala*, are responsible for our perception of night and day, that is duality. Ida nadi predominates at night, the parasympathetic nervous system is active, the subconscious mind is active, and the release of melatonin

within the brain increases. During daylight hours, pingala predominates, the sympathetic nervous system is more active and serotonin is released within the brain, bringing conscious functions to the fore, as the subconscious mind submerges.

The two nadis, ida and pingala, and the nervous systems, pull the awareness from one extreme to the other, binding us to the duality of mundane circumstances due to the interconnection and interrelationship with the external forces of the sun and moon. The entire biological system is programmed to the movements of the sun and moon cycles. However, a yogi can develop control of the autonomic nervous system so that the body and mind are not swayed to extremes. This means developing the voluntary and central nervous systems, activating sushumna nadi and ajna chakra. Such a person lives in a perfectly balanced state of being. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:17) it is written:

*Sooryaachandramasau dhattah kaalam raatrindivaatmakam.
Bhoktree sushumnaa kaalasya guhyametadudaahritam.*

The sun and moon divide time into day and night. Sushumna is the consumer of time. This is the conveyed secret.

The period of time when day meets night is known as *sandhya*. It can be seen as an external event but it is an internal event. It represents the period of sushumna. We cannot alter the external happenings but a yogi can make the moment when ida and pingala merge a prolonged experience. In the *Shiva Swarodaya* (v. 138) it says:

*Na sandhyaam sandhirityaahuh sandhyaa sandhirnigadyate.
Vishamah sandhigah praanah sa sandhih sandhiruchyate.*

Sandhya is not the external sandhya when day meets night, it is that period when the two opposite pranas meet.

When the two pranas flow through sushumna, and when time and space are not separate identities in the mind, there is no difference or extremity.

Sushumna is called, “the consumer of time.” When the kundalini shakti in mooladhara chakra is released through sushumna, shakti is involuting back to its original infinite state – therefore it is called, “the consumer of time.”

What is shoonya?

Swami Satyananda: Shoonya is void, but it is not a state of nothingness. It is a very deep and dynamic state of consciousness. It is the cause and origin of that which constitutes the manifest universe. It is bindu or the nucleus. According to the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, shoonya is the step before the final samadhi. The word shoonya is generally used to describe the unfolding process between asmita samadhi and nirvana. Shoonya also describes the state of *asamprajnata samadhi* or the negative phase of samadhi. Just as the word samadhi describes the range of supraconsciousness, so shoonya describes all the negative phases of samadhi in which there is unconscious supraconsciousness. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:10) it is written:

*Vividhairaasanaih kumbhairvichitrai karanairapi;
Prabuddhayaam mahaashaktau praanah shoonye praleeyate.*

When the maha shakti is aroused by the various asanas, pranayamas and mudras, the prana dissolves into shoonya.

Awareness of the object, onlooker and looking are absorbed into one, the symbol shines in the consciousness, but there is no consciousness of it. That awareness is held by the subtle existence of vasana in the causal body or unconscious mind. At this point of samadhi, one becomes totally helpless.

What happens to the prana shakti during samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In the process of samadhi, the evolution of individual consciousness and shakti is very rapid and systematic. It is a process of refining the ego, vasanas and mind, which are intricately linked. Vasana is not something bad. It is responsible for the will to live. If it is completely

eradicated before self-realization takes place the will to live will be removed. Once mind and prana are reabsorbed into the source, the vasanas also become non-existent. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:11–12) it is written:

*Utpannashaktibodhasya tyaktanisheshakarmahanah;
Yoginah sahajaavasthaa svayameva prajaayata.*

*Sushumnaavaahini praane shoonye vishati maanase;
Tadaa sarvaani karmaani nirmoolayati yogavit.*

The sahaja state is conquered on its own (occurs by itself) in him whose remaining karmas are abandoned and who experiences the rising of shakti. (11)

When prana is flowing through sushumna, the mind is in pure shoonya. Then all the karmas of the one knowing yoga are uprooted. (12)

When kundalini shakti reaches sahasrara chakra then the last traces of karma, vasana and ego are destroyed. As the kundalini moves up sushumna the various samskaras stored in each of the chakras are pulled forth into manifestation. These samskaras are expressed through the ego.

In Samkhya, Vedanta and Hindu philosophy, samskara is considered to be the primal form of existence. Every action is an expression of our previous samskaras. The force of desire to experience is channelled through ida nadi, and the force which leads to action is channelled through pingala nadi. It is not a matter of eradicating or suppressing these two nadis: they must be brought together. The force flowing in both these nadis must be channelled through sushumna; only then can their influences be nullified. In hatha yoga the problem of desire, vasana, impression, samskara, karma, action and reaction is approached by uniting these two channels of chitta and prana shakti.

The process of samadhi is involution of shakti into pure consciousness. It is a process of eliminating the base supports of the individual mind. The *Shiva Samhita* (5:111) states:

*Yah karoti sadaadhyaanamaajnaapadmasya gopitam;
Poorvajanmakritam karma vinashyedavirodhatah.*

He who always contemplates on the hidden ajna lotus, at once destroys all the karmas of his past life without any opposition.

Why is it so important to stabilize the pranas and the mind?

Swami Satyananda: Inner knowledge becomes effulgent of its own accord as it is always there, just as the sun on a cloudy day has not ceased to exist, but has only become obscured. When the mind becomes still the prana becomes steady and it is revealed. The task is not to struggle for illumination, but only to quieten the mind and steady the body and its prana, then the light will inevitably shine forth. The very nature of the mind is split, and on account of this, a constant struggle appears to go on. The lower instinctive subconscious mind demands one thing and the discriminative higher mind dictates the opposite.

Similarly, the pranas are subject to constant modification by the sense perceptions and experiences, and these uphold and sustain the mental turmoil. Therefore, conflict and disharmony between mind and body, ida and pingala, are inherent in human existence before enlightenment. Conflict is the unavoidable characteristic of the twofold nature before union is achieved. This conflict is the driving force not only in individual evolution, but also in social evolution and planetary evolution. Without friction and conflict there is no life.

The problem of bondage and suffering arises, however, when one fails to appreciate the significance of conflict in the personal and cosmic pageant. One identifies with the conflict; one takes sides; one pays fluctuating allegiance to one side or the other and so passes into bondage, losing sight of the greater role of conflict within the total scheme of existence. Liberation remains impossible within the confines of duality. Dual experience, twofold nature, inherently causes struggle, but the moment the two opposing natures

cooperate, inner knowledge and union are experienced. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:15) it is written:

*Jnaanam kuto manasi sambhavateeha taavat;
Praano'pi jeevati mano mriyate na yaavat.
Praano mano dvayamidam vilayam nayed yo
Moksham sa gachchhati naro na kathanchidanyah.*

How can there be inner knowledge in the mind as long as prana is alive and mind is not dead? As long as the twofold nature of mind and prana can be quiescent, liberation is attained. It is not possible for any other person.

Therefore, for realization it is important to be able to recognize and appreciate the greater union which is being forged out of apparent opposition and conflict. This is the meaning of spiritual perspective. Thought, desire and action have to coordinate and cooperate if there is to be inner wisdom and illumination. So long as there is conflict there is no room for anything else. So long as one's pranas are running wild, so long as the vrittis of the mind are turbulent, how can unfoldment take place? Inner awakening can only occur when there is complete stillness and steadiness in body, mind and soul.

HATHA YOGA PRACTICES AND SAMADHI

How is samadhi attained through hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: A hatha yogi draws all his prana from the different parts of his body and takes it to sahasrara chakra at the top of the head. Then he enters into samadhi, the superconscious state. It is very difficult, therefore, to bring him down to objective consciousness by merely shaking his body. Hatha yogis have remained buried underneath the earth in samadhi for years together. They plug the back of the nostrils through khechari mudra with their long tongues. Prana and apana, which move in the chest and anus respectively, are united by the yogic processes of

jalandhara, moola and uddiyana bandhas and the united prana-avana is driven into the sushumna nadi of the spinal canal. The pranas, when thus driven, also draw up the mind along the sushumna nadi which is otherwise known as *brahma nadi*. During the ascent in the sushumna nadi, the three *granthis*, or knots – brahma granthi at mooladhara chakra, vishnu granthi at manipura chakra and rudra granthi at ajna chakra – should be cut asunder by strenuous efforts.

These knots prevent the ascent of kundalini. Bhastrika pranayama breaks down these knots. When kundalini shakti, lying dormant in mooladhara chakra in the form of a coiled serpent with face down, is awakened by spiritual sadhana, it ascends upwards towards *sahasrara chakra* or the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head, taking along with it the mind and prana also. When the mind is in sushumna, the yogi is shut out from the objective, physical consciousness of the world. He is practically dead to the world, sees various visions and moves in *chidakasha*, the mental, ethereal space. Samadhi starts.

Is hatha yoga a suitable path to samadhi for everyone?

Swami Satyananda: As shakti and consciousness manifest in their different forms through the various realms, so there are as many different means to re-establish unity. Either through the physical body, prana or mind, and by any of the various sadhanas; but ultimately it demands the unification of all three. Which sadhana to follow depends on what attracts your entire attention. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:63) it is written:

*Evam naanaavidhopaayaah samyak svaanubhavaanvitaah;
Samaadhimaargaah kathitaah poorvaachaaryairmahaatmabhih.*

Thus there are many various methods, depending on individual experience, of the path to samadhi, told by the early teachers and the great ones (mahatmas).

What effect does the merging of the pranas have on sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: No matter what is practised and how much it is practised, until kundalini shakti has been aroused and moves up through sushumna, whatever is practised will be a conscious effort; it will not be spontaneous. When breath retention is performed, it is done by conscious effort, but when kevala kumbhaka occurs it is a spontaneous happening. Awakening of the shakti means spontaneity.

The pranas can only merge when the time is ripe and a yogi can only wait for that moment. Just as day and night meet at a designated moment and not just when you think it would be a suitable time, similarly ida, pingala and sushumna will only merge at an appointed time.

Therefore, a yogi has to adopt a peculiar and expectant attitude, like a servant awaiting his master. It is a state of relaxed preparedness. He remains poised and ever ready for an event which will occur inevitably in its own time. He accepts that to precipitate that event is not within his control or power, yet it is his destiny that it will occur and he must be ever vigilant in sadhana. It should not be interpreted as fatalism or laziness, but as a state of surrender and readiness which is to be sustained by constant awareness.

That is why relaxation in yoga is a sattvic experience and not a tamasic one. Relaxation for a yogi is not inertia, indolence, laziness or 'turning off'. Rather it is a state of equipoise, balance and receptivity.

The merging of the pranas results in a state called *manonmani*, which literally means mind without mind, or to be more explicit, it is consciousness or awareness devoid of the individual functioning of the mind. Manonmani means to experience the dissolving or vaulting of the barrier which delineates or encircles the individual mind and its functions, so that a greater mind beyond that barrier is revealed and can assume control. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:19–20) it is written:

*Vaayuh parichito yasmaadagninaa saha kundaleem.
Bodhayitvaa sushumnaayaam pravishedanirodhatah.
Sushumnaavaahini praane siddhyatyeva manonmanee.
Anyathaa tuitaraabhyaasaah prayaasaayaiva yoginaam.*

When the vayu is increased then the gastric fire (samana) should be taken along with kundalini in the aroused sushumna and blocked. (19)

When the prana flows in the sushumna this state of manonmani (consciousness devoid of mind) is established. Therefore, other forced practices are just laborious to the yogi. (20)

What techniques are given in *Gheranda Samhita* for attaining samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: In Sage Gheranda's teachings there are a total of six techniques for attaining the state of samadhi. In the first technique shambhavi mudra is practised. It is called dhyana yoga samadhi. The second is nada yoga samadhi, for which bhramari pranayama is essential. The third is known as rasananda samadhi and khechari is practised in it. Laya siddhi samadhi is the fourth samadhi and its success lies in yoni mudra. The fifth samadhi is bhakti yoga samadhi. The last technique is called manomoorchha samadhi. These six samadhis are included in the raja yoga aspect of Sage Gheranda's tradition, and a sadhaka should practise them in a sequence. In this sequence he describes dhyana yoga samadhi first. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:5–6) it is written:

*Shaambhavyaa chaiva bhraamaryaa khecharyaa yonimudrayaa;
Dhyaanam naadam rasaanandam layasiddhishchaturvidhaa.*

*Panchadhaa bhakti yogena manomoorchhaa cha shadvidhaa;
Shadvidho'yam raajayogah pratyekamavadhaarayet.*

Shambhavi and bhramari, khechari and yoni mudras respectively accomplish the four states of dhyana, nada, rasananda and laya siddhi. (5)

The fifth is bhakti yoga and manomoorchha is the sixth, constituting raja yoga. These six are then described. (6)

It needs to be understood properly that here the discussion is on different states of samadhi, but the instructions which are given are actually for meditation. When one enters into the state of meditation after perfecting the practices of pratyahara and dharana, then the process of making further progress in that state of meditation is the attainment of samadhi.

So the techniques which Sage Gheranda is describing here are not precisely an introduction to the state of samadhi. Actually they indicate how to proceed further in the state of meditation itself and in this way attain samadhi. In the first technique he says to practise shambhavi mudra and focus the consciousness in the self. In the second state he says to practise nada yoga. In the third he says to practise khechari and so on.

External directions are given, but the sage has not defined the state of samadhi. His point of view is that one enters the state of samadhi by adopting a technique of deepening the consciousness in the state of meditation, and then obtains the result according to one's nature, attachment, internal bondage and *guna*, or quality. But in the end even these have to be discarded or renounced.

How does practising trataka help maintain the state of samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: With the awakening of ajna chakra, the dormant layers of the mind are stimulated. With the awakening of these dormant areas, the distinction in the perceptions of what is conscious, what is subconscious and what is unconscious disappears. This change takes place at the level of ajna chakra. *Bodh*, enlightenment, mental awakening, takes place at the level of ajna chakra. That state of awakening has to be channelled, and that is done through the practice of trataka. The sixth practice of hatha yoga is

trataka, which is a way of achieving optimum concentration of awareness and mind.

Through the practice of trataka one can develop the ability to focus the mind at any time, a necessary skill in the higher practices of yoga. There is also a very deep meaning behind the practice of trataka. The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali declare that even in the highest state of meditation or samadhi, certain impressions, ideas or experiences remain in the consciousness, and thus they disturb the concentration of mind. These deep impressions or ideas which do not disappear, even in samadhi, are known as *pratyaya*. If the mind has not been taught to concentrate, and concentration has only been practised superficially, when these *pratyaya* manifest in deep meditative states, their pull or attraction is extremely powerful, as there is nothing on the other side of the mind to balance it. The ability gained through trataka becomes useful at that moment. When the visual distraction is stopped, we are able to experience a quiet mind which is like a still pond or lake.

How can practising breath retention lead to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: In order to stop the activities of the mind, pranayamas, particularly *kumbhaka*, breath retention, are practised in yoga. Even in the normal state, if breath retention is performed forcibly, there will be a slight feeling of dizziness or maybe a headache and the head becomes light. In this state the mental activities gradually reduce and finally stop completely. This is the final outcome of breath retention. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:16) it is written:

*Manomoorchchham samaasaadya mana aatmani yojayet;
Paramaatmanah samaayogaatsamaadhim samavaapnuyaat.*

Practising manomoorchha kumbhaka, making the mind one-pointed, the yogi should meditate on atman, thus the union with paramatma (Supreme Self) is attained in samadhi.

Manomoorchha means the mind becoming ‘unconscious’. What happens in the state of unconsciousness? Knowledge of the body and knowledge of the thinking process is lost. Just as one may go into a coma externally, in exactly the same way, when the mind becomes unconscious, the entire activity of the antahkarana is stopped. At that time only prana shakti remains in an awakened state inside and conducts all the activities.

For this practice to have positive results it is imperative to have mastery over breath retention. When breath retention is perfected, the mind becomes stable and enters the state of disciplined antahkarana, which is here named manomoorchha samadhi. In this state the antahkarana does not run after external materialistic things, but becomes absolutely one-pointed, and at that time unconsciousness of the external world is experienced.

After attaining this state, an effort should be made to unite one’s mind and inner consciousness, *atma*, with the Supreme Self, *Brahman* or *paramatman*. When that union with the Supreme Self takes place, that is samadhi.

A technique of breath retention which can be practised in the state of meditation to make the antahkarana stable and one-pointed is referred to in the sloka. If one tries to understand it as a yogic practice, it can be said to be a technique of raja yoga, and the attainment of this state is possible only by controlling the mind.

Prolonged practice of moorchha pranayama prepares the body and psyche for spontaneous entry into meditation. As the practice is perfected, kumbhaka becomes extended and effortless, and with the mind focused on Brahman one enters manomoorchha samadhi.

How far can nadi shodhana take one on the path to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: Nadi shodhana is a complete practice in itself and, as stated in the scriptures, can lead to the experience of kevala kumbhak and samadhi. However, the diligence of a sadhaka is required to arrive at this state. In

texts such as *Shiva Samhita*, the various remarkable stages following the practice of nadi shodhana presume an aspirant of such calibre. These scriptures were written by highly accomplished yogis, who actually described their advanced practices.

Why does *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* include shambhavi mudra in the chapter on samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:35) shambhavi mudra is introduced thus:

*Vedashastrapuraanaani saamaanyaganikaa iva;
Ekaiva shaambhavee mudraa guptaa kulavadhooriva.*

The Vedas, shastras and Puranas are like common women, but shambhavi is secret like a woman of good heritage.

This sloka is not ridiculing the scriptures, it is merely stating that anyone can read these shastras and understand what he may, but those intent on attaining substantial spiritual experience will have to practise. For this purpose shambhavi mudra is recommended, but it has to be learned from the guru. If shambhavi is practised with sincerity and perseverance, it is bound to awaken higher experiences. The word shambhavi is a name of the shakti, or creative power of consciousness, Shiva. Shambhavi can stir Shambhu or supraconsciousness. Shambhavi mudra is also known as *bhrumadhya drishti*, gazing at the eyebrow centre.

Shambhavi is likened to a woman of good heritage or *kula*. The tantras explain shakti, the female aspect and principle as *kula*. Shiva, the male principle is *akula*, without heritage. The union of the two is *kaula*. That is known as *vama marga tantra*. Shambhavi is a technique employed in tantra to arouse deeper states of experience. Only the initiated are taught these practices. Therefore, what is being said in the sloka is that scriptures such as the Vedas are for the general public, but shambhavi is for the initiated.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* shambhavi is not given in the chapter on mudras, it is included in the chapter on samadhi for a good reason. In the state of samadhi, shambhavi mudra takes place of its own accord. This is described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:36–37):

*Antarlakshyam bahirdrishtirnimeshonmeshavarjitaa.
Eshaa saa shaambhavee mudraa vedashaastreshu gopitaa.
Antarlakshyavileenachittapavano yogee yadaa vartate;
Drishtyaa nishchalataarayaa bahiradhah pashyannapashyannapi.
Mudreyam khalu shaambhavee bhavati saa labdhaa prasaadaad-
guroh;
Shoonyaashoonyavilakshanam sphurati tattattvam padam
shaambhavam.*

Introverted, one-pointed awareness with an unblinking external gaze, this is shambhavi mudra which is preserved in the Vedas. (36)

If the yogi remains with the chitta and prana absorbed in the internal object and gaze motionless, though looking, he is not seeing, it is indeed shambhavi mudra. When it is given by the guru's blessing, the state of shoonyaashoonya arises. That is the real state of Shiva (consciousness). (37)

How does shambhavi mudra create an attitude that can take one to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:7–8) Sage Gheranda describes the practice of dhyana yoga samadhi. The first mantra outlines the physical and mental aspects, including use of shambhavi and how to approach the practice. In the next mantra he says that one should meditate on one's soul in the middle of the space element and meditate on the space element in the middle of one's soul.

*Shaambhaveem mudrikaah kritvaa aatmapratyakshamaanayet;
Bindu brahmamayam drishtvaa manastatra niyojayet.*

*Khamadhye kuruchaatmaanamaatmamadhye cha kham kuru;
Aatmaanam khamayam drishtvaa na kinchidapi budhyate;
Sadaanandamayo bhootvaa samaadhistho bhavennarah.*

Adopting shambhavi mudra, see the atma, soul or self, and then perceiving Brahman, fix the mind in bindu. (7)

Merge the soul in the eternal space, merging the space with jivatma (the individual soul) and jivatma with paramatma (the Supreme Self). With this the yogi becomes ever blissful and enters into samadhi. (8)

He says, see yourself entering the space element, see yourself totally immersed in the space element. The feeling should be that the soul is coiled around the space element from all sides. One has to experience this kind of attitude, then one will have the experience of inner bliss and samadhi.

This practice is similar to shoonya meditation, in which first of all one sits in a meditative posture and mentally empties the body completely. The same technique is described here. The space element is seen pervading the entire inside of the body.

One becomes aware of the mental space, *chidakasha*. A luminous symbol is then observed by focusing the attention on that space element in chidakasha. That symbol could be a flame, a star or a white point – a symbol of brightness and light. A state gradually develops in which the body no longer appears to be a hollow shell, rather the whole body looks radiant. This is a mental attitude. It can be regarded as the beginning of brahmi vritti. The body is no longer seen as it was previously. On the contrary, it is viewed in a different form, as space and soul, so that one's consciousness becomes subtle, subtler and then extremely subtle. With this attitude, with this awakening, one gradually starts experiencing the self inside.

Space is an element which has no form. It is just a state or condition. The form, flow and touch of air can be experienced, but space cannot be experienced. How could

it be experienced? Through vision? But vision is not the basis of space. Space itself has been considered as the basis of all other elements. Space is considered as a boundary line between the manifest and unmanifest worlds. All the other elements are capable of manifesting themselves inside space or ether. Body and consciousness merge in that infinite and endless space. Progressing from the *apara* or material dimension and entering the *para* or supreme dimension, the atma, soul or self, is experienced in the state of samadhi.

What happens when shambhavi mudra is perfected?

Swami Satyananda: Perfect concentration is when the totality of awareness knows only the object upon which it is concentrated. Perfect concentration is meditation, perfect meditation is samadhi. When one gazes at the eyebrow centre for an extended period a small light appears. That has to be seen with the eyes closed and concentrated upon until nothing else exists except the light. When samadhi is achieved through the practice, it is called *unmani*. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:39) it says:

*Taare jyotishi sanyojya kinchidunnamayed bhruvau;
Poorvayogam mano yunjannunmaneekaarakah kshanaat.*

With perfect concentration, the pupils fixed on the light, by raising the eyebrows up a little from the previously described (shambhavi), mind is joined and instantly *unmani* occurs.

What is the role of khechhari and shambhavi mudras in samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: Khechhari directly stimulates lalana and bindu, which releases a nectarine fluid that is responsible for creating the state of ecstasy. Lalana and bindu are in close proximity to ajna chakra. Shambhavi mudra directly awakens ajna. Both shambhavi and khechhari cause the external mind to ‘turn off’ and both awaken the inner awareness.

Swami Muktananda states that during the period of his sadhana, secretions sometimes flowed profusely from the cranial region, and his eyeballs would spontaneously roll upwards into shambhavi. In deep meditation his tongue would automatically go upwards through the nasal pharynx and a voice from within instructed that this would create a greater state of experience by opening the passage to sahasrara. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:38) it is written:

*Shreeshambhavyaashcha khecharyaa avasthaadhaamabhedatah;
Bhavechchittalayaanandah shoonye chitsukharoopini.*

Both shambhavi and khechari states, though there is a difference in the place of concentration or influence, bring about ecstasy, absorption in void, the experience of *chit sukha* or the pleasure of consciousness.

How is khechari mudra used as a pathway to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:11), rasananda samadhi, which uses khechari mudra, is described:

*Khechareemudraasaadhanaat rasanordhvagataa yadaa;
Tadaa samaadhisiddhih syaaddhitvaa sadhaaranakriyaam.*

When khechari mudra is performed and the tongue is folded upward, then by this simple yogic practice, samadhi is perfected.

Sage Gheranda says that in the practice of *khechari* the tongue is folded upward and backward, entering into the deeper nasal cavity, and with this, samadhi is perfected.

For this purpose the tongue must be long. In order to elongate the tongue the techniques of *dohan*, milking, and *chedan*, piercing, are used.

With prolonged practice, it is said that *amrita*, nectar, flows from sahasrara. Excitement takes place in the region of the brahmarandhra and also in the extremities of the nerves and nadis in that area. As a result of this vibration and excitement, drops of nectar start flowing from sahasrara.

They are received by the tip of the tongue. The taste experienced in that state is extremely blissful. At that time the yogi is so immersed in bliss that body consciousness is lost and there is liberation from the external experiences. The blissful samadhi attained through the juice of that nectar is *rasananda samadhi*.

What happens when advanced hatha yoga methods are diligently practised?

Swami Satyananda: The methods indicated in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, such as shatkarma, asana and pranayama, are intended to awaken sushumna nadi. When these are practised, everything is properly prepared. The chakras are clear, the pathways of the nadis are unblocked, and awakening can take place. Mudras and bandhas are intended to awaken kundalini, which arouses meditation spontaneously.

Even if one does not know how to meditate, or does not have sufficient willpower, if khechari mudra is practised, after some time a 'serum' flows in the body, which changes the state of mind and flow of prana. One begins to feel 'high', and the brainwave patterns alter. Even with the eyes open, an altered experience begins. With the eyes closed, one is able to have inner experience. Music can be heard internally. The beauty of flowers in any season can be seen, anywhere. The moon can be seen, even when there is none. It is not hallucination, it is a real and conscious experience. The body becomes quiet and the mind steady. Mudra is one of the very important aspects that hatha yoga has inherited from tantra to expand the consciousness.

Meditation may be a spiritual practice but its effects on the body are definite and physiologically verified. Alpha waves become intense, respiration becomes minimal, consumption of oxygen decreases, blood pressure and temperature drop. The rishis realized these effects and therefore instructed the use of particular asanas for meditation and also the use of mudras, especially khechari. When sushumna is active, the heart rate and blood pressure drop, and at that time khechari should

be used. Mudras definitely affect the quality of meditation. This can be verified by personal experimentation. Practise meditation of a passive type for six months. Then change to an active type incorporating mudras like maha vedha, and others, especially khechari mudra.

The nature of the meditation experience will definitely alter. When meditation becomes deep and the mind is absorbed in the point of concentration, unmani occurs. That is the beginning of samadhi. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:43–47) it is written:

*Savyadakhshinanaadeestho madhye charati maarutah
Tishthati khecharee mudraa tasminsthaane na samshayah.*

*Idaapingalayormadhye shoonyam chaivaanilam graset;
Tishthate khecharee mudraa tatra satyam punah punah.*

*Sooryaachandramasormadhye niraalambaantare punah;
Samsthitaa vyomachakre yaa saa mudraa naama khecharee.*

*Somaad yatroditaa dhaaraa saakshaat saa shivavallabhaa;
Poorayedatulaam divyaam sushumnaam pashchime mukhe.*

*Purastaachchaiva pooryeta nishchitaa khecharee bhavet;
Abhyastaa khecharee mudraapyunmanee samprajaayat.*

When the prana which is in the right and left nadis moves in the middle nadi (sushumna) that is the condition for khechari mudra. (43)

The fire (of shakti) being swallowed (suppressed) midway between ida and pingala in that shoonya (of sushumna), is in truth the condition for khechari mudra. (44)

The middle of the sun (pingala) and moon (ida) is the ‘unsupported’, in which is situated vyoma chakra or the centre of space (void). This mudra is called khechari. (45)

In the flow from the moon (bindu) is the beloved of Shiva (consciousness). The opening of the unequalled divine sushumna should be filled from behind (by the tongue). (46)

The sushumna being completely filled at the rear (upper palate) also is khechhari. The practice of khechhari mudra is followed by the state of unmani (consciousness devoid of mind). (47)

What is the purpose of vajroli, sahajoli and amaroli?

Swami Satyananda: The purpose of vajroli, sahajoli and amaroli is to reverse the natural downward flow of apana so that the vayu flows upward through sushumna. When it is achieved the external mind becomes instantly tranquil and the awareness enters the inner dimensions. Mental equanimity means a steady mind, peaceful and unflinching in every circumstance. Many years are traditionally allotted for the perfection of these mudras and for attaining contentment. A strong yet flexible mind can never be an overnight attainment.

Reversal of apana vayu through sushumna is the primary accomplishment, yet it is more difficult to cope with that experience and positively sustain it. In this sense, vajroli, sahajoli and amaroli are not physical practices but indwelling attitudes or states of perfection. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:14) it says:

*Chitte samatvamaapatre vaayau vrajati madhyame.
Tadaamarolee vajrolee sahajolee prajaayate.*

When mind is in equanimity and (prana) vayu proceeds through sushumna, then amaroli, vajroli and sahajoli are attained.

Is yoni mudra (shanmukhi mudra) a means to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: If yoni mudra is practised in normal surroundings, what will the experience be? The first experience will be a pratyahara state, as the consciousness loses contact with the senses. If just shanmukhi mudra is practised, then the senses, which influence the mind and brain every moment by keeping them externalized, become peaceful. The external influences cease and the state of pratyahara is achieved.

In the state of pratyahara, the mind is internalized, consciousness is internalized and the inner senses awaken. When, in this state of pratyahara in yoni mudra, a mantra is practised along with kumbhaka, sensations are felt in the pranamaya body: awakening is experienced in the region of prana. A little difficulty may be felt during inhalation and exhalation as the body is not getting the usual amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide is accumulating. In this way the nervous system is activated. A state of drowsiness or a sort of sleepy state dawns and gradually the external consciousness starts vanishing.



Shanmukhi mudra

Yogis have purposely tried to create this state through kumbhaka so that the external senses do not cause any distraction to the one-pointedness of consciousness. When the state of drowsiness arises inside consciousness and the mind starts becoming internalized, if the awareness is then increased, one enters the state of meditation. With mental chanting of the mantra, the mental recitation takes one from gross to subtle *nada*, sound or vibration. Hearing or not hearing *nada* is dependent on how deep the one-pointedness is. When consciousness is engaged in a vibration, sound or *mantra* in this kind of practice, then eventually it is not just listening to external sounds through the ears, the vibration produced inside can be listened to. This sound is actually always there, but it cannot be heard with the ears. In *Gheranda Samhita* (3:55–56) it is written:

*Yonimudraa paraagopyaa devaanaamapi durlabhaa;
Sakrittu labdhasamsiddhih samaadhisthah sa eva hi.*

*Yaani paapaani ghoraani upapaapaani yaani cha;
Taani sarvaani nashyanti yonimudraa nibandhanaat;
Tasmaadabhyaasanam kuryaadyaadi muktim samicchati.*

Yoni mudra is a top secret kriya. It is not easily accessible even to the gods. Those who achieve mastery over it by regular practice attain samadhi. (55)

All the major sins, minor sins, etc., of the universe are erased by yoni mudra. Thus it should be practised by people seeking salvation. (56)

This is actually a description of one of the states of samadhi. People who are desirous of attaining *mukti*, liberation, should practise yoni mudra. Here yoni mudra is mentioned in the context of attaining the state of samadhi or *nada anubhooti*, the experience of the subtle nada which can be had in meditation.

Why is nasikagra mudra an important hatha yoga practice?

Swami Satyananda: *Nasikagra mudra*, nosetip gazing, is a practice of hatha yoga which directly awakens the kundalini shakti in mooladhara. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:41) it is written:

*Ardhonmeelitalochanah sthiramanaa naasaagradattekshana
Chandraarkaavapi leenataamupanayatri spandabhaavena yah
Jyoteeroopamasheshabeejamakhilam dedeepyamaanam param;
Tattvam tatpadameti vastu paramam vaachyam kimatraadhikam.*

With mind steady, eyes semi-open, gaze fixed on the nosetip, the moon (ida) and sun (pingala) suspended, without any movement (physical or mental), one attains the form of light (jyoti) which is endless and is complete, radiant, the Supreme. What more can be said?

By external gazing at the nosetip, a vision of the inner light is aroused as the flow of shakti in the mind and body becomes concentrated. When a light switch is turned on, light emanates from the bulb. The same applies in the physical body when kundalini shakti is released from mooladhara and is drawn up to ajna chakra, and the inner light appears. That light should be concentrated upon, as it is the essence

of being, the inner light or *jyoti*. The purpose of practising nasikagra mudra is to arouse that experience.

How does unmani mudra take one to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Unmani* is a mudra, or gesture, which reflects the feeling of one-pointedness, and in that attitude of one-pointedness sometimes a divine attitude is observed. Therefore, the high grade of meditation which leads to samadhi should be practised along with unmani mudra, and it should be practised in a natural state without any show or display. When this simple and natural state is achieved, then samadhi is attained by uniting the atma, the individual soul, with paramatma, the Supreme Soul, by means of any yogic practice.

In relation to unmani, meditation is on the nosetip. When the mind or attention is focused on the nosetip, the state of unmani dawns. In kundalini yoga *nasikagra drishti*, nosetip gazing, has a special significance. Kundalini yogis believe that there is a small energy centre or sub-psychic centre in the tip of the nose, linked with both mooladhara and ajna chakras. This means that when the gaze is fixed there all the experiences preserved in the psychic centres from mooladhara to ajna can be activated and kundalini can awaken.

In this state of unmani mudra the receptivity of chitta is activated. This sensitivity of consciousness becomes strong, making it easy to enter into a subtle state from the gross or physical state, and thence from the subtle into the causal state. When this state of consciousness is attained, it is a good time to practise meditation.

How can channelling the energy of the emotions become a pathway to samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: Due to variations in the nature of human beings, the guru gives different instructions to different disciples for meditation. Bhakti yoga is excellent for those who are emotional or soft-hearted. Sometimes this

kind of pure and tender feeling emerges as an obstacle in worldly life. For example, if someone becomes extremely emotional at home, in the family, at work and in society, then people start wondering what has happened – has that person become mentally unbalanced?

It is not an imbalance, but whether it is due to sensitivity, tenderness of the heart or activation of the emotions, such a feeling is sometimes seen as an obstacle when it surfaces in the world. In yoga, however, it is believed that when the feeling or attitude is channelled in the right direction, it can become a way of attaining samadhi. It is in this context that Sage Gheranda is discussing bhakti yoga samadhi, a technique prescribed for emotional people. It says that one should meditate on one's ishta in anahata chakra. When the mind is completely absorbed in the ishta, then the experience of faith, devotion, love and bliss takes place in one's life. When one is fully absorbed in that feeling, then one merges and becomes one with the deity, the *ishta*. This is the state of bhakti yoga samadhi. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:14–15) it is written:

*Svakeeyahridaye dhyayedishtadeva svaroopakam;
Chintayedbhaktiyogena paramaahlaadapoorvakam.*

*Aanandaashrupulakena dashaabhaavah prajaayate;
Samaadhiih sambhavetena sambhavechcha manonmanee.*

In one's heart, with supreme delight and utmost devotion, one should think of the form of one's ishta deva or deity. (14)

With this come tears of sheer bliss, the body is thrilled, the mind becomes free of sensations, is one-pointed and experiences samadhi and manonmanee. (15)

Sage Gheranda says that one must meditate on the form of one's *ishta deva*, preferred or desired deity, in one's heart and create a feeling of surrender towards that deity with full faith, devotion, love and bliss through *chintan*, deep and sincere thinking. When the mind is absorbed in meditation on the

deity, blissful tears start rolling down and as a result of this blissful experience the body starts trembling or shaking. Attaining this engrossed state, the sadhaka becomes merged with the deity and attains bhakti yoga samadhi.

Why is the shivalinga worshipped in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Worship of the shivalinga means concentration upon atma, the highest consciousness, and practices leading to its realization. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:42) it says:

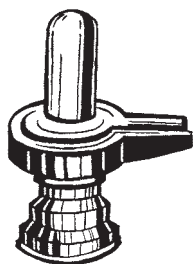
*Divaa na poojayellingam raatrau chaiva na poojayet;
Sarvadaa poojayellingam divaaraatrinirodhatah.*

Worship the lingam neither by day nor by night. By blocking the day and night the lingam should always be worshipped.

“Day and night,” means pingala and ida. The best time to practise is during the flow of sushumna at sunrise, sunset, midday or midnight. Practice at other times inevitably proves fruitless as these are the only times when both the subtle bodies and the subtle states of mind become readily accessible.

“By blocking the day and night,” means stopping the flow of shakti in pingala and ida nadis; that is, stopping awareness or consciousness of day and night, of time and space, and all other dualities associated with mundane consciousness. Then only will subtle awareness arise.

The term lingam indicates a state which is invisible, which is unseen, but which is in existence. Consciousness is formless and abstract. Here consciousness does not mean human consciousness. It means the total cosmic consciousness. Any word can be used to indicate that consciousness – Brahman, God, Allah, etc. The consciousness is invisible, abstract and infinite. It cannot be comprehended by the finite mind. The ultimate reality is incomprehensible to anyone, even to a saint or a yogi. If one wants to comprehend that ultimate reality



Shivalinga

there is only one way: one has to become that. Therefore, that consciousness which cannot be comprehended by just any means should be comprehended by its symbol. That symbol is known as lingam in Sanskrit. It is not a phallic symbol; it is called shivalinga, and *Shiva* means absolute, ultimate, total, cosmic or universal consciousness. *Shivalinga* is the representative or symbol of that cosmic one.

If one wants to get out of this level of consciousness in which one is confined, some means has to be used which has a direct effect on the inner force. That inner force is called Shiva.

LAYA AND NADA SAMADHI IN HATHA YOGA

What is laya?

Swami Sivananda: *Laya* is the state of mind when one forgets all the objects of the senses and becomes absorbed in the object of meditation. *Laya* enables one to have perfect control over the five tattwas, mind and indriya or senses. The fluctuations of mind stop. The mind, body and prana are entirely subdued.

What happens in the state of laya?

Swami Satyananda: *Laya* is the absorption of the two polarities: mind and prana, meditator and the object of meditation, the unmanifest Shakti and the manifest shakti. There is absorption in the source from which the two have originated. The witness (meditator), that which is witnessed (meditated upon) and the act of witnessing (meditating) becomes a single, continual awareness rather than three experiences. It is the state of samadhi.

When individual prana and mind are absorbed in their origin there is no conscious, subconscious or unconscious existence. Then what remains? It is not death, because at death the prana, will and consciousness are absorbed into

the *karana sharira* or causal body. For this reason death is not moksha. During death the *jiva* or individual soul is still entrapped within the laws of prakriti. However, the laya state means absorption in that which exists beyond the causal body, *hiranyagarbha*, the cosmic body. It is the absorption of prana and consciousness in the higher chakras. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:29–30) it states:

*Indriyaanaam mano naatho manonaathastu maarutah.
Maarutasya layo naathah sa layo naadamaashritah.*

*So'yamevaastu mokshaakhyo maastu vaapi mataantare.
Manah praanalaye kashchidaanandah sampravartate.*

Mind is the ruler of the senses, prana is the ruler of the mind. Laya (dissolution) is the lord of the prana and that laya is the basis of nada. (29)

This is called moksha (liberation), but others might not call it so. Nevertheless, when prana and mind are in laya, indescribable ecstasy is created. (30)

The finite mind is the operator of the senses and shakti is responsible for the finite mind. If the mind could realize its initial state as shakti it would be dissolved in that, and nada, the vibration of shakti, would be perceived.

Yogi Swatmarama states that the experience of ecstasy created by the process of laya is none other than moksha, even though those who follow other paths will dispute the quality of the laya samadhi. Depending on the psychological makeup of the disciple, and on the power of the guru, it can be accomplished without other active effort beyond the absorption of the body and mind into a greater cosmic mind and body. Laya is a process of tantra which can only be taught by one who is a *jnani guru* or guru of knowledge and wisdom.

How can laya be attained with hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: For the state of laya to arise, *kevala kumbhaka*, spontaneous breath retention, has to take place

for an extended period, not just for a few seconds. When this happens, the mind will automatically become absorbed in the point of concentration. Side by side, sense perception diminishes. All these processes lead into laya or samadhi.

When breathing is suspended for a prolonged period, the mind and prana become absorbed in a subtle and unconditioned state of consciousness. Conditioned awareness can be compared to the breaking of white light into all the colours of the spectrum. Just as there are various coloured rays, so there are various aspects of mind. Perceiving the original unified and undifferentiated condition of light as white light is absorption of prana and mind in consciousness.

When there is no awareness of mundane reality, the body and senses cease to operate. Once the awareness returns to the conscious state, the body, prana and sensory functions begin to operate again. Laya arises where the entire prana of the body is in union with the cosmic prana.

When the individual vibrational rate of prana is totally harmonized with the unconditioned cosmic prana then there is a merging, but until the individual tattwas of earth, water, fire, air and ether are dissolved, the breath, mind and prana continue to fluctuate. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:31) it says:

*Pranashtashvaasanishvaasah pradhvastavishayagraha;
Nishcheshto nirvikaarashcha layo jayati yoginaam.*

When inhalation and exhalation are stopped, enjoyment of the senses annihilated, when there is no effort, and a changeless state of mind occurs, the yogi attains laya or absorption.

How is yoni mudra used in laya samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: While describing laya siddhi, Sage Gheranda says that first of all yoni mudra should be practised and one should see oneself in the form of shakti – at that time the feeling that one is a male or female has to be discarded. There does not remain any kind of distinction according to sex; one may be a child, young man, young lady, old man or

old lady. One has to see oneself with this attitude in the form of shakti, and also have the conviction that there is only one *purusha* (male) in the universe, and all the rest are females in the form of shakti. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:12–13) it says:

*Yonimudraam samaasaadya svayam shaktimayo bhavet;
Sushringaarararasenaiva viharetparamaatmani.*

*Aanandamayah sambhootvaa ekyam brahmani sambhavet;
Aham brahmeti chaadvaitasamaadhistena jaayate.*

Assuming yoni mudra, a yogi should create the feeling of shakti in himself and unite blissfully with paramatma. (12)

Thereafter, established in blissful oneness, he becomes one with Brahman and realizes, ‘I am Brahman’. This is non-dual samadhi (called *laya siddhi yoga samadhi*). (13)

Once Mirabai went to visit a saint. She sent the saint a message that she had come to see him. At this the saint sent a message back to her, saying that he did not meet with females. Mirabai laughed at this. She said, “I have learned today that another *purusha* (male) exists in the world, whereas previously I used to think there was only one *purusha* in the world, Krishna, and all remaining human beings were His shakti.” When her reply reached the saint’s ears, his eyes were opened and he accepted Mirabai as his guru. The same feeling or attitude which was in Mira is seen here in the teachings of Sage Gheranda.

Everyone accepts that a *bhakta*, devotee, or a *sadhaka*, aspirant, worships God Almighty in some form or other. These are all different *bhavas*, attitudes or feelings, which are called *bhakti bhava*, the feeling of devotion. Some *sadhakas* or *bhaktas* worship the Lord in the form of a child. Some people meditate on the form of a lad. Some people look at the Lord in the form of a friend, *sakhya bhava*, or with *premi bhava*, the feeling of a lover, or as his servant, *dasya bhava*, others see him in the form of guru and worship him with the appropriate attitude and feelings. All these feelings strengthen *bhakti* or devotion.

It is known that Surdas considered Krishna in the form of a boy and Uddhava took Him as a friend. Tulsidas accepted Lord Rama as his master and himself as His servant. Mirabai accepted Lord Krishna as her lover. Thus different saints have expressed their faith in Him by their own feelings towards the Lord. In samadhi the same kind of situation or condition arises.

When something is dear to us, we decorate it and want to see it in a pleasing form. In childhood, dolls are played with. Every day there is a new feeling and so the doll's clothes and hairstyle are changed, and the doll is rocked with the feeling, "This is my doll." In the same way a feeling is awakened that I might decorate and beautify my deity in whatever form I wish. However, this samadhi technique is suitable only for those sadhakas or aspirants who have already controlled their lower feelings and senses.

Each person has their own feelings. The inspiration may come from anywhere, but when there is a feeling of devotion, adorning the Lord is done on an inner form and one is totally lost in that. Just as a lady in love forgets everything for her lover, and due to that true love she is eventually successful in making him her own, aspirants or sadhakas are united with the limitless existence on the strength of their feelings. No other knowledge except awareness of Brahman remains in the end. They are totally engrossed in bliss. This is the state of laya siddhi samadhi.

Why is *nada anusandhana*, exploration of sound, an important sadhana for hatha yoga sadhakas?

Swami Satyananda: Gorakhnath was a tantric guru who had attained unimaginable power and insight into the subtle realms of mind and creation. He had wondrous experiences and faced many obstacles in the path of spiritual evolution. According to him and other evolved souls, the easiest way to laya is through absorption in nada. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:65–66) it says:

*Ashakyatattvabodhaanaam moodhaanaamapi sammataam;
Proktam gorakshanaathena naadopaasanamuchyate.*

*Shreeaadinaathena sapaadakotilayaprakaaraah kathitaa jayanti;
Naadaanusandhaanakamekameva manyaamahe mukhyatamam
layaanaam.*

I will describe the concentration on nada as told by Gorakhnath which is attainable by even the unlearned who are unable to comprehend Thatness (tattwas). (65)

There are one and a quarter crore (12,500,000) ways told by Sri Adinath to attain laya, but we think the one and only thing is nada anusandhana (exploration of nada). (66)

This introduces an entirely new aspect of hatha yoga. At this stage, hatha yoga is coming into the range of raja yoga, as from here on one is dealing with higher states of consciousness and samadhi.

The ways of concentrating the mind vary to suit the different temperaments and personalities. According to Nath yogis, however, there is one way suitable for all – laya in nada. Shakti is the tool to liberation as she is the vehicle of consciousness. On a subtle level it manifests as sound. Therefore, Gorakhnath says to absorb the mind in that sound.

Sound is known as *nada*, it is called *shabda*. To be more precise, *nada* is the imperceptible sound and *shabda* is perceptible. When shabda is language it is called *nama*. Nada is the creative power of the highest consciousness. It exists in each individual and throughout the cosmos.

There is an important difference between subtle and gross sound. The subtle sound is not caused by two things being struck together, whereas gross sound can only occur by two objects coming together. Produced or struck sound is *ahata nada*. Unproduced sound is *anahata nada*. Subtle sound is heard by the consciousness itself. Gross sound is heard through the ear sending vibrations to the brain.

The particular method in nada yoga of nada anusandhana reveals this inner sound to the mind. Nada

anusandhana should not be confused with the technique in kriya yoga called nada sanchalana. They are two different practices but can achieve the same result. *Anusandhana* means 'exploration' or 'search'. The idea is to explore the sound in all dimensions. The sound has to be followed until you reach the subtlest vibration. Each level of sound is joined and dependent upon the other.

It is said that beyond senses, beyond what the eyes can see and the ears can hear, there are objects that can be seen and there are sounds that can be heard. One must either intensify the perception of the mind or withdraw the perception of the mind. These nadas are occurring in the mind and the sound is to be heard there. One's mind has to be attuned; nada anusandhana means the search for transcendental sound. Sometimes nada anusandhana can be practised directly by plugging the ears, or the nada can be revealed to you by practising certain hatha yoga kriyas. When the mind follows the nada it becomes absorbed in that sound. There is union of consciousness and energy; there is yoga.

Nada anusandhana has been described by Yogi Gorakhnath, who is a great figure in the history of yoga. His disciples and devotees never divulge when he actually lived as he is considered to have been beyond a simple human birth. Throughout the north of India, Gorakhnath is extremely well known and there are many legends regarding his paranormal and superhuman powers. In fact, there has probably been no other tantric yogi to surpass him. When Yogi Swatmarama states that this nada anusandhana is recommended by Gorakhnath, this is sufficient to emphasize its importance to hatha yoga sadhakas.

Which hatha yoga practices awaken the inner sound?

Swami Satyananda: By sitting down and plugging the ears, with practice one can begin to hear various ranges, qualities and forms of sound. If no sound is initially heard, then bhamari pranayama should be practised for some time. There are the various techniques to reveal and enhance the

inner sound. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:67–68) instruction is given:

*Muktaasane sthito yogee mudraam sandhaaya shaambhaveem;
Shrinuyaad dakshine karne naadamantaasthamekadheeh.*

*Shravanaputanayanayugalaghraanamukhaanaam nirodhanam
kaaryam;*

Shuddhasushumnaasaranau sphutamamalah shrooyate naadah.

The yogi, sitting in muktasana, concentrated in shambhavi, should listen closely to the nada heard within the right ear. (67)

Closing the ears, nose and mouth, a clear, distinct sound is heard in the purified sushumna. (68)

Though it is stated in these slokas that the nada is heard in the right ear, it is actually heard within the mind. One should not be concerned about which ear perceives it. When the kundalini awakens, sometimes inner voices or narrative can also be heard from the deeper levels of consciousness. The actual phenomenon is difficult to explain at an intellectual level as it is more a feeling that is experienced rather than a physical sound. It is something like two trees talking to each other. This is a higher state. Ultimately the inner voice becomes pure vibration, which is neither picture nor idea nor sound; yet still there is an understanding through it, as if a language is being spoken.

There are certain nada yogis who can answer any question by the vibration they receive. A type of revelation comes to the mind but this does not happen at an intellectual level. The inner voice may also come in the form of symbols which are more difficult to translate.

The Bible was originally a revelation – God spoke. In the same way, the Koran was also revealed – Allah spoke to Mohammed. The Vedas were also revealed by Hiranyagarbha. Rishis heard the verses and wrote them down. Many people can hear a mantra, a sound or music

and some hear narratives. The deeper one goes, the more one comes in contact with the cosmic mind. The inner mind is the universal and transcendental mind.

The outer mind is the individual and empirical mind. This particular mind through which one talks and understands is the individual mind. This mind has its own particular limitations. The knowledge gained through this mind is conditioned. Unless someone speaks one cannot hear what is being said. As the empirical mind is transcended, however, not only can one hear the mantra, one can also hear higher commands. A Veda, Koran, or Bible may be revealed, as the speaker is the cosmic mind. The cosmic mind is the unconscious, symbolized by the four-headed Brahma.

Therefore, if broken sounds are sometimes heard, very unclear conversation, off and on utterances or half-sentences, music, or someone calling very loudly within, the usual practice should simply be continued. The nature of the experience will change. One should take no notice of these things. Continue the usual practice until a point is arrived at where perception of the inner sound becomes systematic, clear and vivid.

The various types of sound that are heard during nada yoga relate to the level of one's spiritual and psychic attainment. Of course, the biological structure also has a part to play, as the physical and mental bodies interact with each other up to a certain stage. For the average person, it is not possible to trace these sounds properly. Initially the nada or sound that is heard is the result of communication between the biological and psychological systems. However, once the awakening of kundalini takes place the sounds have no biological or even psychological basis, they are purely transcendental.

How is bhramari used as a pathway to nada samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:9–10) bhramari pranayama is the medium for samadhi. Sage Gheranda says that by focusing the mind on the inner sound

or *bhramara nada*, the humming sound, for a longer duration, the antahkarana enters into the state of nada samadhi. The antahkarana is to be completely focused on the humming process of bhramari pranayama in nada samadhi. The entire mental faculty is to be totally immersed in it.

*Anilam manda vegena bhraamareekumbhakam charet;
Mandam mandam rechayedvaayum bhrinnaadam tato bhavet.*

*Antahstham bhramareenaadam shrutvaa tatra mano nayet;
Samaadhijaaryate tatra chaanandah so'hamityatah.*

Taking the air in at a slow speed, doing bhramari pranayama, expel the air very slowly on exhalation. While exhaling, a sound similar to the humming of a black bee is produced. (9)

Wherever this nada (sound) is taking place, engage the mind there. This is (nada) samadhi arising with the bliss of 'I am That'. (10)

First one becomes aware of the gross sound and develops awareness of the vibrations of the sound. After this, one tries to listen to the anahad nada. When one forgets the body, forgets the experiences of the senses, forgets all types of physical, intellectual, emotional and thinking processes, and focuses oneself in a nada, then that nada totally merges with the whole personality. It assumes the form of a process just like ajapa. In the process of *ajapa*, mantra japa keeps going on continuously by itself in a natural way and there is no wilful control over it; it cannot be started or stopped at will. Exactly the same kind of condition prevails in nada samadhi.

Sage Gheranda says that once the mind is involved in nada, it forgets all kinds of impressions, is liberated from all kinds of experiences, eliminates external experiences and becomes fully absorbed in the inner sound. When the same sound starts humming in the entire body, then that is the state of nada samadhi, in which the knowledge of the

self-created *soham* sound is attained. As the mind crosses the state influenced by the three gunas and enters the field of nada, the state of consciousness is attracted to bindu. As one-pointedness becomes deep, consciousness is removed from all kinds of dissipations, and one has the living experience of nada: the spontaneous sound of *soham*, 'I am That', is heard.

What are the stages that take one to nada samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:69) four stages of progressive experience of nada yoga are outlined:

*Aarambhashcha ghatashchaiva tathaa parichayo'pi cha;
Nishpattih sarvayogeshu syaadavasthaachatushtayam.*

In all the yogic practices there are four stages; arambha, beginning; ghata, vessel; parichaya, increase; nishpatti, consummation.

The fourth stage verges on samadhi. These four stages are known as *bhava*, spontaneous unfoldment. Each stage is more subtle and refined than the preceding one. These stages are said to apply to all yogic practices, but the *Shiva Samhita* applies them particularly to pranayama.

During each different stage, sound manifests in the inner ear. In the Shiva sutras it is said that through nada anusandhana on the *anahata nada*, unstruck sound, which is represented by the mantra Om, nine stages of yoga or union unfold progressively.

As kundalini shakti rises through the chakras to centres of higher consciousness in the brain, there are four definite stages. These stages relate to the four realms of existence and the four *koshas*, bodies (anandamaya kosha is not in this list). Para nada exists in the cosmic body or *Ishwara tattwa*; pashyanti nada exists in the cosmic causal body, *hiranyagarbha*; *madhyama nada* or psychic sound is *sukshma kosha* or *sharira*, the subtle body and *vaikhari nada* is gross sound, words and letters in the sthula sharira or gross body.

What does the piercing of Brahma granthi mean?

Swami Satyananda: In the *arambha avastha*, the beginning stage of awakening, the aroused kundalini unties the Brahma granthi and activates mooladhara chakra. The granthi is pierced, meaning a passageway is made through. When this occurs, the barriers of the physical body and ego are broken.

Inner sounds are heard resembling tinkling bells but other sounds may also be heard. In his book, *Theories of the Chakras*, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama says he had an experience and a sensation “like the buzzing of bees around the coccyx.” The *Yogashikka Upanishad* states, “A sound arises in Her (kundalini in mooladhara) as if a sprout were shooting out from the tiny seed.” There will be many different experiences according to each individual. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:70–71) it is written:

*Brahmagrantherbhavedbhedo hyaanandah shoonyasambhavah;
Vichitrah kvanako dehe’naahatah shrooyate dhvanih.*

*Divyadehashcha tejasvee divyagandhastvarogavaan;
Sampoornahridayah shoonya aarambhe yogavaanbhavet.*

The Brahma granthi being pierced, the feeling of bliss arises from the void; wondrous, tinkling sounds and the unstruck sounds (anahata) are heard within the body. (70)

When the yogi experiences arambha in the void of the heart, his body becomes lustrous and brilliant with a divine smell and diseaseless. (71)

This sloka states that “the unstruck nada is heard”. ‘Unstruck’ means anahata, but it is not referring to the anahata chakra. The nada of anahata chakra comes at a later stage. Anahata nada is the inner, subtle, pure form of nada, and is depicted by Krishna playing his flute. It represents transcendental, eternal sound. From mooladhara, sound manifests as letters or *varna* of the alphabet, and language. By concentrating on the undivided sound, consciousness also becomes undivided.

What occurs with the piercing of Vishnu granthi?

Swami Satyananda: The same nada which flows through the entire universe flows throughout our entire being. The nada is always there, we just do not perceive it. Like a high frequency radio which has not been finely adjusted, the mind is as yet attuned only to the sensorial impulses. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:72–73) it is written:

*Dviteeyaayaam ghateekritva vaayoorbhavati madhyagah;
Dridhaasano bhaved yogee jnaanee devasamastadaa.*

*Vishnugranthetato bhedaat paramaanandasoochakah.
Atishoonye vimardashcha bhreeshabdestadaa bhavet.*

In the second stage, when ghata is achieved, the shakti goes into the middle nadi. Being fixed in his asana the wise yogi is comparable to a divine being. (72)

When the Vishnu granthi is pierced the greatest bliss is revealed. Then from the void the sound of the kettledrum manifests. (73)

A *ghata* is a vessel for holding water, which recalls an earlier statement in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, “like a vessel immersed in water, inside and outside is water.” This symbolizes the state of mind in which the second stage of nada is perceived. In the second stage, which is called *ghata avastha*, the mind is like a vessel and consciousness is able to perceive the flow of nada within and without. When the Vishnu granthi in anahata chakra is untied the mind becomes attuned to the subtler sound frequencies.

By following the nada from mooladhara to anahata chakra and unknotting the Vishnu granthi, consciousness expands into the *chinmaya* body, the transcendental state.

It is said in sloka 72 that the shakti enters the “middle nadi”. This usually refers to sushumna, but as kundalini has already been flowing in sushumna from mooladhara, it is more likely to be referring to the inner layer, *chitrini*.

What is the experience when the kundalini penetrates vishuddhi chakra?

Swami Satyananda: The third stage in the awakening of kundalini by nada yoga, when the kundalini penetrates vishuddhi chakra, is described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:74–75):

*Triteeyaayaam tu vijneyo vihaayomardaladhvanih.
Mahaashoonyam tadaa yaati sarvasiddhisamaashrayam.*

*Chittaanandam tadaa jitvaa sahajaanandasambhavaah.
Doshaduhkhajaraavyaadhikshudhaanidraavivarjitah.*

In the third stage is the experience of the sound of the drum. Then there is the great void and one enters the place of total perfection or siddhi. (74)

Then the bliss of chitta being attained, natural or spontaneous ecstasy arises. Imbalance of the three humours (doshas), and pain, old age, disease, hunger, and sleep are overcome. (75)

In his book, *Theories of the Chakras*, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama described this as the stage where one “faces the abyss of absolute void”, and due to this experience worldly attachments fall away. This is the prerequisite step before the place of total perfection and accomplishment can be entered. There, the indwelling bliss of an undivided mind is experienced, and this is the source of effortless and natural inner enjoyment and contentment.

In Buddhism, this corresponds to the fifth shoonya out of the eighteen types of shoonya. The characteristic sound heard at this stage of expansion and dissolution of mind is described as the beat of drums.

The benefits when kundalini pierces vishuddhi includes balance of the three humours. This refers to the ayurvedic concept of health as a state of equilibrium which is experienced when wind or *vata*, bile or *pitta*, and phlegm or *kapha* are in dynamic balance in the body.

What does it mean to overcome pain, old age, disease, hunger and sleep? It does not mean that these naturally occurring experiences are eradicated but that their effects are overcome. The yogi who has awakened vishuddhi chakra has attained a level of consciousness in which the normal demands of pain and other physical conditions do not disturb his equilibrium.

A small child who falls and grazes its knee will automatically cry and weep, but the consciousness of an adult who endures the same is barely perturbed. Similarly, the experiences of hunger, pain, old age, disease and desire for sleep, to which a normal individual succumbs, have less influence upon the mind and body of a yogi due to the expanded scope, depth and dimension of his awareness and prana. The pains and demands of the body diminish in intensity, becoming only minor distractions. It is not that the body of a yogi does not become old. All bodies become old – eighty years old, one hundred years old – but due to the greater vista of his experience, the yogi's endurance, vigour, vitality, dedication and energy far surpass the common man's.

The *Shiva Samhita* (3:60–61) describes the state of *parichaya avastha* or 'the state of increase', as the condition in which:

*Tatah parichayaavasthaa yogino'bhyaasato bhavet.
Yadaa vaayushchandrasooryam tyaktvaa tishthati nishchalam.
Vaayuh parichitaa vaayuh sushumnaa vyomni sancharet.*

*Kriyaashaktim griheetvaiva chakraanbhattvaa sunishchitam.
Yadaa parichayaavasthaa bhavedabhyaasayogatah.
Trikoortam karmanaam yogee pashyati nishchitam.*

After this, through practice, the yogi reaches the *parichaya avastha*. In this state, the *vayu* does not move through the moon and sun (*ida* and *pingala*) but remains steady in *sushumna*. (60)

This takes place when one has control of *kriya shakti* or *pingala* and has pierced the six chakras. Then the yogi sees the three-fold effect of *karma*. (61)

This text includes the awakening of ajna chakra in the state of parichaya, but in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* discussion of nada anusandhana, ajna is included in the next state. Additionally, the *Shiva Samhita* states that parichaya is achieved through pranayama, and the yogi should destroy his karma by the use of the *pranava* or *Om* mantra so that he need not be reborn.

What happens when ajna chakra and Rudra granthi are pierced?

Swami Satyananda: In the final stage of perception of the nada, kundalini pierces ajna chakra and the Rudra granthi. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:76) this is described:

Rudragranthi yadaa bhittvaa sharvapeethagato'nilah.

Nishpattau vainavah shabdah kvanadveenaakvano bhavet.

If the Rudra granthi is pierced, the fire of prana moves to the place of Ishwara. Then in the stage of nishpatti (consummation), is the tinkling sound of the flute resonating like a vina.

The sound heard is that of the flute. The flute is always associated with Lord Krishna, they are part and parcel of each other. This, however, is not the only sound heard. Dr Hiroshi Motoyama talks about hearing an echoing voice which called to him.

The *Shiva Samhita* also states that at this stage, “The yogi drinks *amrita*, the nectar of immortality, having destroyed the seeds of his karma.” Nishpatti avastha is equated with nirvikalpa samadhi which renders one a *jivanmukta*, a person liberated in this life.

When the Rudra granthi is pierced, the kundalini moves to sahasrara chakra, the abode of paramshiva, the mahabindu. This is above the state of manifested or differentiated shakti. Here Shiva and Shakti abide together. It is *turiyatita*, even beyond the fourth dimension.

How is yoni mudra used to hear the inner sound?

Swami Satyananda: When practising yoni mudra and perceiving the inner sound, it must be listened to as if listening for another sound within or beyond that sound. One must keep on searching for finer and subtler sounds. In the initial stage of practice, there is awareness of the external sounds and movements but eventually this awareness drops away and only the nada remains. Just as in the dream state the external sounds and movements are not perceived, so is the mind withdrawn while consciously listening to nada. When the mind is absorbed in nada there are no vrittis. Mind is still like a crystal clear pool of water. The reflection seen inside is the nada. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:81–84) it is written:

*Naadaanusandhaanasamaadhibhaajaam yogeeshcharaanaam
hridi vardhamaanam;*

*Aanandamekam vachasaamagamyaam jaanaati tam shreeguru-
naatha ekah.*

*Kanaum pidhaaya hastaabhyaam yam shrinoti dhvanim munih;
Tatra chittam sthireekuryaadyaavat sthirapadam vrajet.)*

*Abhyasyamaano naado'yam baahyamaavrinute dhvanim.
Pakshaadvikshepamakhilam jitvaa yogee sukhee bhavet.*

*Shrooyate prathamaabhyaase naado naanaavidhaa mahaan.
Tato'bhyaase vardhamaane shrooyate sookshmasookshmakah.*

There is a plenitude of bliss in the hearts of the great yogis who remain in samadhi through nada anusandhana (exploration of nada), which is unequalled and beyond any description, known by the one and only Gurunath. (81)

Having closed the ears with the hands, the muni should listen to the inner sound with the mind steady on that, then the state of stillness is achieved. (82)

Through sustained listening to the nada, awareness of the external sound diminishes. Thus, the yogi overcomes mental turbulence within fifteen days and feels the pleasure. (83)

When he first begins to hear sounds during practice there are various prominent nadas. Then with prolonged practice the subtlest of subtleties becomes audible. (84)

Yogi Swatmarama asserts that once the nada is perceived, then sustained listening for fifteen days will pacify the mind and give the pleasure of perfect absorption. This is for the individual to verify. Sound exists in the form of vibrations which are of varying frequencies. In fact, the brain is constantly emitting hundreds of vibrations every second. The more powerful one's consciousness is, the greater the vibrations emanating from the brain will be. These vibrations are of varying intensity and frequency according to the individual. Just as there are spectra of electromagnetic and radio waves, similarly there is a whole range of subtle sound waves which travel beyond the brain and which can be realized within the brain itself.

In the tradition of tantra, knowledge of the structure and combination of gross and subtle sounds is known as *mantra shastra*, and is considered to be very important. In fact, it has been said many times that without mantra there is no tantra. According to both the Vedas and the Bible, the seed out of which the gross manifestation of the material universe is emerging is a matrix of eternal sound.

Mantra exists as energy in the form of gross and subtle sounds. Different dimensions of nada have been perceived and passed on by the great yogis, rishis and munis in the form of mantras. Inner knowledge of mantra is known as *mantra siddhi*. Mantra is to be used for spiritual evolution and must be received from a guru. In the practice of nada yoga, these inner sounds are used as a pathway to pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

What is the effect of inner sounds heard during nada samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In nada yoga various frequencies of sound are perceived. When a word is uttered, its frequency is within

the limited range of the human auditory capacity, and so our ears can hear it. When a sound is heard in the depths of meditation, however, its frequencies are far higher and more rapid than those of external, audible sounds.

Various energy fields are known to modern science, such as electromagnetic fields and radioactive fields. If the chakras can be influenced so that the sound gains a certain momentum of frequency, that sound can also travel through what are called psychic fields.

In the symbolism of each chakra there is a bija mantra in the centre. From mooladhara to ajna these are: *Lam, Vam, Ram, Yam, Ham* and *Om*. This means that every chakra has a confluent sound base. Just as the body is composed of flesh and blood, similarly a chakra is constituted of sound, symbol and light. Hence, when sound attains a certain frequency, it affects the chakras. Therefore, nada yoga is also an instrument in the awakening of kundalini.

When kundalini rises, the sounds are deep, monotone vibrations, like waves pounding on the shore, the clap of thunder and beating of various types of base drums. Or one might describe the sound and sensation as a jet plane or rocket taking off. This occurs in the first two stages of *arambha* and *ghata*. This is described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:85):

Aadau jaladhijeemootabhereejharjharasambhavaah.

Madhye mardalashankhotthaa ghantakaahalajaastathaa.

The first fruits are the sounds of the ocean, then clouds, the kettledrum and jharjhara drum. In the middle stage the conch, gong and horn.

In the middle stage, *parichaya*, higher frequencies are experienced, but these are still loud and penetrating, those which grip the body like a gong or horn. The sounds heard might be described as a bassoon or organ, depending on one's cultural background and the type of sounds one has previously experienced. This is described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:86):

*Ante tu kinkineevamshaveenaabhramaranihsvanaah.
Iti naanaavidhaa naadaah shrooyante dehamadhyagaah.*

Now, reaching the inner point of conclusion, are the tinkling of bells, flute, vina and the humming of bees. Thus, the various nadas are produced and heard from the middle of the body.

In the last stage of consummation or nishpatti, melodious high pitched and reverberating sounds occur, something like a piano, harp or harpsichord. *Hatharatnavali* (4:9) explains that:

*Shrooyate prathamaabhyaase naadaannaanaavidyaanbahoon.
Vardhamaane tato'bhyaase shrooyate sookshmasookshmatah.*

In the beginning of the practice, loud and voluminous sounds of various types are heard. As the practice progresses, sharper and subtler sounds are heard.

In his autobiography, *Chitshakti Vilas*, Swami Muktananda Paramahansa describes different kinds of nadas he experienced which not only resembled the ocean, but also thunder, drums, conch, bells, buzzing of insects, “the murmur of a brook, the rattle of a fast moving train, the drone of an aeroplane, the crackle of a funeral pyre, full-throated singing of the divine name by large groups of devotees, the cries of peacocks and songs of cuckoos.” He states that while hearing the nada his mind would converge upon its source. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:89–90) this is described:

*Yatrakutraapi vaa naade lagati prathamam manah;
Tatraiva susthireebhooya tena saardham vileeyate.*

*Makarandam pibanbhringo gandham naapekshate yathaa;
Naadaasaktam tathaa chittam vishayaannahi kaankshate.*

Whatever nada the mind initially adheres to, it becomes perfectly still in that and dissolves with it. (89)

Just as a bee drinking honey is unconcerned about the fragrance, so the mind engaged in nada is not craving for sensual objects. (90)

He witnessed the centre which emits divine sparks when elevated by nada and all his senses were drawn towards it.

What is the effect of nada on the mind?

Swami Satyananda: Just as audible sound frequencies influence the brain, mind and body, the subtle frequencies affect their underlying layers. When music is listened to it arouses different emotions and states of mind, affecting different areas and centres of the body. Sound is the most powerful tool in pacifying the restless mind, and vice versa. Sound exerts an influence upon the entire brain, body and mind of an individual as both are an aspect of shakti, the matrix which underlies the entire phenomenal world. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:91–93) it says:

*Manomattagajendrasya vishayodyaanachaarinah;
Samartho'yam niyamane ninaadanishitaankushah.*

*Buddham tu naadabandhena manah samtyaktachaapalam;
Prayaati sutaraam sthairyam chinnapakshah khago yathaa.*

*Sarvachintaam parityajya saavadhaanena chetasaa
Naada evaanusandheyo yogasaamraajyamichchataa.*

By the sharp goad of nada, the mind, which is like a furious elephant roaming in the garden of the senses, is controlled. (91)

When the mind ceases to be fickle and is united by fixing it in nada, it becomes immobile like a wingless bird. (92)

One who desires complete dominion of yoga should thus explore the nada with an attentive mind and abandon all thoughts. (93)

The mind, under the sway of the senses, is likened to a raging elephant confined within a small garden. Nada, as the vehicle of shakti, is then likened to a goad, as it draws and prods it towards internal absorption and union with its source. Just as music can calm and relax the mind, making one completely forget problems and worries, so absorption in the subtle nada brings forgetfulness of the external world.

Why is nada such a powerful way of stilling the mind?

Swami Satyananda: Whatever process is adopted to attain a state of higher consciousness, it has to be one which can totally absorb and preoccupy the mind. Identification with the gross aspect of existence has to be forgotten or transcended for a period of time. Expansion of mundane consciousness has to be the motivation for the practice. Otherwise it is like expecting to fly to the moon with the whole contents of one's house. Similarly, one cannot expect to attain higher states of consciousness with the gross mind. Some things have to be left behind on the journey, such as empirical awareness.

Conscious mind is experienced when the mind is attracted to external objects which appear separate from oneself or one's ego. That mind is in a continuous state of hypnosis. It is hypnotized by the external objects. This hypnosis has to become an internal process so that the mind is now hypnotized by the internal object and oblivious to the mundane external reality. When there is total concentration upon the internal object then there is absorption of mind.

The nada heard in meditation easily captivates the mind. Once perceived, it exerts a magnetic force upon the functioning mind. At one time Swami Muktananda was unable to sleep for fourteen consecutive nights as the experience of nada and sleep are incompatible. His body would respond with a mildly painful quiver to whatever variety of nada he heard. In his autobiography, *Chitshakti Vilas*, he wrote: "During this phase of heavenly music a yogi acquires the art of dancing". He would even hear the nada while working, moving, eating, and when he felt angry the nada became intensive.

Some methods of yoga advise renunciation of the material world to detach the mind from its externalizing tendency. However, hatha yoga approaches this matter from a different point of view. Mind is energy. The energy appears as sound. If the consciousness can become aware of that sound it will realize its own nature, as ultimately the two forces cannot be kept separate from each other. This is described in detail in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:94–99):

*Naado'ntarangasaarangabandhane vaaguraayate.
Antarangakurangasya vadhe vyaadhaayate'pi cha.*

*Antarangasya yamino vaajinah parighaayate.
Naadopaastrato nityamavadhaaryaa hi yoginaa.*

*Baddham vimuktachaanchalyam naadagandhakajaaranaat;
Manahpaaradamaapnoti niraalambaakhyakhe'tanam.*

*Naadashravanatah kshipramantarangabhujangamah;
Vismritya sarvamekaagrah kutrachinnahi dhaavati.*

*Kaashthe pravartito vahnih kaashthena saha shaamyati;
Naade pravartitam chittam naadena saha leeyate.*

*Ghantaadinaadasaktastabdhaantahkaranaharinasya;
Praharanamapi sukaram
syaachchharasandhaanapraveenashchet.*

Nada is like the net which snares the deer (mind) inside. It is also like the hunter who slays the deer inside. (94)

It is like the bolt locking a horse inside, for one who is self-controlled. The yogi must therefore meditate regularly upon the nada. (95)

Just as liquid mercury is solidified by sulphur, so mind is bound by nada and freed from restlessness. Then one moves unsupported in void. (96)

Hearing the nada, mind, which is like a serpent within, becomes captivated and oblivious to all else, not moving anywhere else. (97)

As fire burns wood and both subside together, so the mind which moves with nada is absorbed in it. (98)

Just as a deer attracted by the sound of bells is easily killed by an expert archer, so is the mind silenced by an adept in nada yoga. (99)

What does it mean when the unstruck sound is heard?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:100) it says:

*Anaahatasya shabdasya dhvanirya upalabhyate.
Dhvanerantargatam jneyam jneyasyaantargatam manah.
Manastatra layam yaati tadvishnoh paramam padam.*

One hears the sound of the unstruck resonance (anahata shabda); the quintessence of that sound is the (supreme) object (consciousness). The mind becomes one with that object of knowledge and dissolves therein. That is the supreme state of Vishnu (padam).

When one is concentrating there is awareness of the object, awareness of the process of concentration and awareness of the one who is concentrating. When both the awareness that there is nada and the sound of the nada dissolve into the vibration of the nada, then nada alone exists. In *Avadhoota Gita* (2:16) it states that:

*Satataa'bhyaasayuktastu niraalambo yadaa bhavet.
Tallayaalleeyate chaantargunadoshavivarjitah.*

When, through constant practice, one's concentration becomes objectless, only then being divested of merits and demerits, one attains the state of complete dissolution in the Absolute through the dissolution of the object of concentration.

Some say Vishnu is the highest state and everything manifests from him and that even Brahma, the Creator, manifested from his navel. Others maintain Shiva or Brahman as

the origin, with the three shaktis and the trinity having originated from there.

Nada is a state of creative movement and is therefore not the final state of absolute dissolution, or *pralaya*. According to Kashmir Shaivism, nada is the continuum of the creative descent. When it condenses into a dynamic point it is bindu. From these two – nada and bindu – manifestation arises, beyond the differentiation of time, space, subject and object. When the two poles become one, then nada is heard.

Is nada present in the final state of dissolution?

Swami Satyananda: Each of the *tattwas* or *mahabhutas*, the five elements, has a particular quality. Sound is the quality of *akasha tattwa*, the space element, the finest and subtlest of the five elements. As long as there is consciousness of the existence of sound or even that one is sound itself, dissolution into the highest state has not yet been attained. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:101–102) the enquiry into nada is completed thus:

*Taavadaakaashasankalpo yaavachchhabdah pravartate;
Nishshabdham tatparam brahma paramaatmeti geeyate.*

*Yatkinchinnaadaroopena shrooyate shaktireva saa;
Yastattvaanto niraakaarah sa eva parameshvarah.*

The conception of akasha (the substratum of sound) exists as long as the sound is heard. The soundless, which is the Supreme reality, is called the Supreme atma. (101)

Whatever is heard of the nature of the mystical nada is indeed shakti. That in which all the elements (panchatattwa) find dissolution, that is the formless being, the Supreme Lord. (102)

In atma there is no ‘is’ or ‘is not’. It cannot be said that there is or is not sound. We think now that we are not in atma. We are, but there is no awareness of that state. Individual existence, like waves on the ocean, seems to be separate but

nevertheless is part of the whole. In the final state of atma, there is completeness.

Atma is known according to its attributes, as *satchidananda*, existence-consciousness-bliss. Supraconsciousness, or atma, is the state where consciousness pervades even the potential force of shakti. In that state, shakti can be said to be the silent bystander. In creation shakti is active, and consciousness can be said to be the silent bystander. Satchidananda, therefore, is present even in the tattwas. In dissolution, the tattwas subside into consciousness.

THE STATE OF RAJA YOGA

What is meant by the state of raja yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:77–78) it is written:

*Ekeebhootam tadaa chittam raajayogaabhidhaanakam;
Srishtisamhaarakartaasau yogeeshvarasamo bhavet.*

*Astu vaa maastu vaa muktiratraivaakhanditam sukham;
Layodbhavamidam saukhyam raajayogaadavaapyate.*

This is called raja yoga, when there is one element in the mind or chitta. The yogi becomes Ishwara, being the creator and destroyer. (77)

Whether there is liberation or not, nevertheless there is pleasure. The pleasure arising from laya is derived from raja yoga. (78)

Here, ‘element’ does not mean the tattwas of earth, water, fire, air or ether, nor the tattwas of manas, Shiva or Shakti. It is the experience of ‘Thatness’, the experience of atma, where the vrittis or mental modifications are nullified. Then, “the yogi becomes Ishwara.” Ishwara is another name for the totality of cosmic unmanifest shakti, the total creative principle of the highest consciousness, the sattwic state of shakti. It is the combination of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara.

Experience of this state is supreme *anandam*, the highest bliss. However, we are told it is not the final liberation. Liberation can only occur when one's consciousness has been absorbed back into the mahabindu. Ishwara is a state of evolution after the mahabindu. *Ishwara* is the cosmic body. *Hiranyagarbha* is the cosmic causal body.

Few people attain the final state of jivanmukti whether through nada anusandhana or any form of yoga; but do not be discouraged, as there is nevertheless abiding and indwelling pleasure inherent in this state. That pleasure is not derived from the senses but from the experience of ongoing absorption in the expanded unified cosmic mind which encompasses both creation and dissolution within itself. This is the pleasure derived from raja yoga. At the same time, one should not be satisfied only with this, but should continue striving for mahasamadhi, nirvana, kaivalya, moksha.

Why does shambhavi mudra lead to Raja yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Shambhavi mudra stimulates ajna chakra in the brain directly behind the mid-eyebrow point. Through this, the mind is absorbed and the nada perceived. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:80) Yogi Swatmarama says:

*Unmanyavaaptaye sheeghram bhroodhyaanam mama sammatam.
Raajayogapadam praaptum sukhopaayo'lpachetasaam.
Sadyah pratyayasandhaayee jaayate naadajo layah.*

In my opinion, contemplation on the eyebrow centre leads to a mindless state immediately. It is a suitable method even for those with less intellect to attain the state of raja yoga. The laya attained through nada gives immediate experience.

Contemplation on the eyebrow centre refers to shambhavi mudra. It can be done with the eyes open or closed. Even simple concentration on ajna chakra itself is effective. It requires no intellectual capacity or 'brainpower' to do

this, only sincere application to the practice. When the mind is absorbed in the point of concentration, the eyes spontaneously turn upwards. Samadhi thus develops.

Spiritual life and experiences are independent of academic ability and intellectual or mundane knowledge. Spiritual knowledge, power and experience exist on a different plane altogether. Anyone who hears nada should listen intently, excluding other experiences and thoughts so that the mundane state of consciousness is illumined.

When Yogi Swatmarama says that in his opinion eyebrow centre gazing leads immediately to mindlessness, he is actually narrating from his own experience. Those who have become highly established in spiritual consciousness through hatha yoga and raja yoga, gain control of the mind and are able to transcend its modifications and enter into the samadhi states at will.

Is raja yoga samadhi a higher state than hatha yoga samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: Raja yoga means realization of, or being, Shiva, Brahman, Atma, the Self, cosmic consciousness. Hatha yoga is the same experience but from the reflection on the primordial shakti, that is, before nirvana samadhi. In the highest state of raja yoga there is no reflection in shakti; Shiva and Shakti are in equanimity. Hatha yoga is the means to experience this, shakti or tattwa is the tool. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:103–104) it says:

*Sarve hathalayopaayaa raajayogasya siddhaye;
Raajayogasamaaroodhah purushah kaalavanchakah.*

*Tattvam beejam hathah kshetramaudaaseeniyam jalam tribhih.
Unmanee kalpalatikaa sadya eva pravartate.*

All the processes of hatha and laya yoga are but the means to attain raja yoga (samadhi). One who attains raja yoga is victorious over time (death). (103)

Tattwa is the seed, hatha is the soil, total desirelessness (vairagya) is the water. By these three the wish-fulfilling tree (kalpavriksha), which is the unmani avastha (mindless state), immediately sprouts forth. (104)

According to the sloka, through hatha yoga and absorption of mind and prana, i.e. *laya*, unmani avastha is attained. *Unmani* is the condition when the finite mind ceases to function. *Avastha* is a state or condition achieved through effort but it is impermanent. It means that hatha yoga will arouse the condition of unmani but until it becomes an established condition or natural state, *sthiti*, one remains at the level of hatha yoga and does not attain raja yoga.

Hatha yoga culminates in the union of ida, pingala and sushumna in ajna chakra, whereas raja yoga culminates beyond this, when the kundalini reaches sahasrara chakra.

The Supreme is neither state, experience, nor condition. There are really no words to express it exactly as it goes beyond all thought categories. Although the Upanishads and various other scriptures have attempted to put it into words, it is just 'beingness'.

Kalpa vriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree, not only grants whatever is asked of it, but it also bestows moksha; in actuality it is not a tree but the symbol of a particular state of spiritual evolution. It is located in the subtle body just below the pericarp of anahata chakra, the heart centre. When anahata chakra is awakened, one's desires, however big or small, are fulfilled. This is also the case when the chakra in which kalpa vriksha grows is awakened. Some people call this psychic power. The symbol of the *akhandajyoti*, the eternal flame symbolizing the existence of jivatma and the state of consciousness unperturbed by the external world, is in anahata chakra. At this level of consciousness, vairagya becomes spontaneous and the mind is in perfect equanimity.

Swatmarama states, therefore, that when one reaches this level of consciousness – that is, if kundalini penetrates

anahata – one attains the unmani avastha. However, it should be remembered that it is a state achieved by effort and further endeavour must be made to attain a higher state.

GURU AND SADHAKA

What is the role of the guru in hatha yoga samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: Only when a person has experienced the fruits of raja yoga can he know its real value. Those who have never experienced it will be unable to appreciate its worth. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:8–9) it is written:

*Raajayogasya maahaatmyam ko vaa jaanaati tattvatah;
Jnaanam muktih sthitih siddhirguruvaakyena labhyate.*

*Durlabho vishayatyago durlabham tattvadarshanam;
Durlabhaa sahajaavasthaa sadguroh karunaam vinaa.*

Who really knows the magnitude of raja yoga? Through the guru's words, inner knowledge, liberation and perfection fructify. (8)

Without the compassion of the true guru, renunciation is impossible, perception of the truth inaccessible and sahaja samadhi unobtainable. (9)

Yogi Swatmarama has divulged the secret of inner awakening – guru. No matter how much you practise yoga, if there is no guru, there can be no enlightenment. The quickest method to evolve the inner consciousness is through devotion and service to one's guru – the light of his soul will enlighten all devoted to him. His words are the atma shakti which is transmitted to you. They are the seeds which you water when you apply and practise what he has said. When the seeds bloom forth his words become the living reality.

A living guru is the manifestation of your own atma, and atma only appears when you have reached a certain stage of inner awareness. What the external guru says and wants for you is the voice of your own atma. Therefore, without his

will there is nothing you can do. Guru can give you instant awakening if he wants to. Therefore, the one way to samadhi is grace or *anugraha* from the guru.

Grace has to be earned by spiritual discipline and desire. It cannot be bought, nor can the guru be cheated. There are four main ways or *upayas* described in the *Shiva Sutras* to purify the body and mind and earn this grace. They are known as *anavopaya*, *shaktopaya*, *shambhavopaya* and *anupaya*.

Anavopaya includes physical discipline, such as hatha yoga, which purifies the body and awakens sushumna. It is therefore also known as *kriyopaya*.

Shaktopaya is for a person whose mind and body are already considerably pure. It consists of only concentration, mantra repetition and instilling the idea that, "I am the Supreme Consciousness. The universe is none other than the expansion of the Self." This is also known as *jnanopaya*, as it uses the aspect of jnana. Kundalini rises by means of the higher intellect and, therefore, it includes jnana yoga and other higher stages of raja yoga.

Shambhavopaya is for those who are highly evolved, who can become realized by simply concentrating on the idea of pure consciousness or the *shiva tattwa*. Through constant self-analysis, awareness and reflection, they are led to self-realization. This is the path of Advaita philosophy.

Anupaya is direct realization through one simple action of the guru. *An* or *anu* denotes something minute, 'the nucleus of the nucleus'. Thus *anupaya* infers the grace which is attained by nominal effort. A well known example of this is when Balakrishna opened his mouth and Yashodha, his adopted mother, saw the entire universe. *Anupaya* is, therefore, also known as *anandopaya*, as it instils instant bliss.

What sort of person is qualified to transmit the knowledge that leads to samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:114) *Yogi Swatmarama* says:

*Yaavatraiva pravishati charanmaaruto madhyamaarge
Yaavadbindurna bhavati dridhah praanavaataprabandhaat.
Yaavaddhyaane sahasasadrisham jaayate naiva tattvam
Taavajjnaanam vadati tadidam dambhamithyaaapralaapah.*

While the prana does not flow in the middle passage (of sushumna), while the bindu is not steadied by restraining the prana, while mind does not reflect spontaneous meditation, then those who speak of spiritual knowledge are only indulging in boastful and false tales.

According to him, to say anything about the awakening of shakti and consciousness as long as it has not taken place within yourself, is hypocritical. However, anyone who talks on such a subject must have had some sort of realization or else he would not understand or perceive such a phenomenon. The principle of hatha yoga and tantra is to practise and realize rather than talk and philosophise. Actions speak louder than words, and practice makes perfect.

This is why the practitioner of kundalini yoga will not merely be a preacher or a teacher. Others may occupy themselves by teaching about spirituality but a yogi will live it. His life is his teaching, and those who have an eye to see and an ear to hear will be able to gain everything from him effortlessly, by a process of direct transmission. Those who see only their preconceptions when they look at the world will have to be content to listen to preachers until their own blockages are loosened and their perception is illumined.

Which is the complete experience? To hear about chocolate and imagine that its taste can be understood from that, or to taste chocolate itself? To be told about spell-binding music, or to hear it oneself? To see an enchanting scene in a picture, or to be there oneself? To hear about physical, psychic or spiritual experiences and imagine they can be understood from that, or to experience them oneself? That is the difference between a teacher and a yogi.

Is enlightenment possible without the instructions of a guru?

Swami Satyananda: Whichever yogic text is picked up, the same thing is written. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* says, “Yoga should be practised in the way instructed by the guru.” This is probably the most important sentence in the whole text. The *Shiva Samhita* says, “Having attained the guru, practise yoga. Without the guru, nothing can be auspicious.” According to *Skanda Purana*, “The systematic stages of yoga can only be learned from a competent guru.” The *Yoga Bija* says that, “He who wants to practise yoga should have a competent guru with him.” In the shruti it is written that, “Mahatmas reveal those things only to him who has deep devotion towards his guru as well as God.” Thus, guru is the most vital element in sadhana.

Guru is not merely a yoga teacher. He is the only one who can enlighten your soul by the luminosity of his own revealed spirit. He reflects the brilliance of your spirit and what you see in him is actually your own Self. *Gu* means ‘darkness’ and *ru* means ‘light’. *Guru* is the one who removes the darkness and ignorance from the mind to reveal the pure light of the inner consciousness. He may be an adept in yoga or any science, or he may be completely illiterate. His social qualifications are unimportant as far as one’s spiritual experience is concerned. The important factors are obedience and having faith in his words; then it does not matter whether his instructions seem right or wrong, they will prove fruitful.

In the science of hatha yoga there is a specific system which has to be followed, and if one finds a hatha guru he will instruct each person in the correct manner of practice. This does not mean that the same system should be followed by one’s neighbour. The guru knows how to tackle all the individual problems one has. If no obstacles arise, good, the seeker can be guided quickly. If one is facing certain problems or difficulties, the guru will know how to guide one step-by-step, in accordance with one’s own evolution.

We have very little understanding of our bodily functions and are virtually unaware of our mental potential. Consciousness is like an iceberg; only the superficial portion which is above the surface can be seen, and due to limited perception, we cannot understand how yoga can evolve the spirit from the gross body and the lower consciousness. Therefore, when sadhana is taken up, the guidance of one who thoroughly understands the process of spiritual unfoldment is essential. There is only one person for this purpose, and that is the guru.

What is the lifestyle of one who has awakened the kundalini?

Swami Satyananda: The place of sadhana has to be conducive for one's practice. It must be quiet and free from disturbances which can distract one. When the way to arouse kundalini has been discovered, experiences unfold by themselves as each of the chakras is pierced. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:16) it is written:

*Jnaatvaa sushumnaasadbhedam kritvaa vaayum cha
madhyagam;
Sthitvaa sadaiva susthaane brahmarandhre nirodhayet.*

Staying in the most suitable place, having found out how to penetrate sushumna and make the prana flow through the middle passage, it should be blocked in the brahmarandhra, the centre of higher consciousness.

The union of *shakti*, energy, and *shiva*, consciousness, in the higher brain centres is depicted in tantra as man and woman, Shiva and Shakti, in an interlocking embrace. The final union and samadhi takes place in sahasrara chakra, at the crown of the head. The point at the back of the top of the head is called *brahmarandhra*. The energy and consciousness must remain there, for if they pass beyond, there is no return to the physical body. Therefore, it is stated that kundalini should be held in the brahmarandhra.

However, kundalini must return back down to mooladhara chakra under the guidance of ajna, otherwise the spirit or atma will leave the body for good. When kundalini returns, the yogi once again assumes his life in the mundane world, but with an altered and elevated state of consciousness and awareness. Nothing changes externally, the transformation has taken place internally. There is a Zen proverb, “Before enlightenment – chopping wood and carrying water; after enlightenment – chopping wood and carrying water.”

What qualities are essential for the attainment of samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: Sage Gheranda says that samadhi is the highest yoga. It is not a simple practice. Not all practitioners can reach this high state. Only due to having some special qualities and as a result of guru’s grace and blessings can one attain samadhi. In fact, this is essential for everything. If one wants to become a yogi, then one should have the qualities of a yogi. If one wants to steal, then one should have the qualities of a thief. If one wants to be non-violent, then one should have the qualities of non-violence. In the same manner, qualities are required in the life of a practitioner in order to achieve samadhi, and as long as the guru does not identify and develop these qualities, samadhi cannot be attained.

As a sadhaka or practitioner, one does not know oneself or one’s qualities. It is only the guru who has the knowledge of which qualities are essential for samadhi and who gives guidelines to the disciples after having identified their personality, weaknesses and achievements. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:1–2) these qualities are outlined:

*Samaadhischa paro yogo bahubhaagyena labhyate;
Guroh kripaaprasadena praapyate gurubhaktitah.*

*Vidyaprateetih svaguruprateetiraatmaprateetirmanasah
prabodhah;*

*Dine dine yasya bhavetsa yogee sushobhanaabhyaasamupaiti
sadyah.*

Supreme yoga in the form of samadhi is attained by great good fortune. The only recipients are those who are the disciples of the guru and who receive the guru's grace. (1)

Only that yogi should be considered as a deserving candidate for the practice of samadhi who has knowledge and experience of (spiritual) education from the guru regarding the soul or self and whose awakening of mind increases day by day. (2)

The sadhaka should have firm faith in the science of yoga, and unlimited faith, respect and total surrender for the guru. Self-confidence is also essential. The capacity for mental perception should be sharp, *manasah prabodhah*, so that one is capable of listening to and receiving the inner voice. It is only under these circumstances and by the special grace of guru that the disciple can attain high yogic samadhi.

Sage Gheranda has underlined some essential qualities here. The first one is faith in the system or technique. Whichever technique is adopted should be practised continuously with faith and effort. It will not work if practised today, not practised tomorrow and then left altogether the day after tomorrow and only resumed again when remembered a month later.

It is a general rule of yoga that continuity is essential. One has to practise constant effort as a discipline, not according to one's own sweet will. Continuity or constant effort is possible only when there is full faith in the technique. Therefore, Sage Gheranda says, *vidyaa prateetih*, whatever the method, technique or knowledge may be, one should have faith in it.

After this he says, *svaguru prateetih*, one should have faith in one's guru, as often it is the qualities of the disciple that determine the type of direction the guru gives. Due to one's mentality one tries to understand those instructions on the intellectual level and often can see no justification for them, but those instructions are very useful for one's future. Also, if these instructions are followed only because one has intellectualized and thought about them, or if one is unable

to understand their real purpose, then one also falls. If the guru in whom one has faith has taken a resolve to teach one something that will enable attainment, one should at least have enough trust to follow the instructions with faith and respect. This feeling also has the effect of awakening a sattwic attitude. In the state of surrender it is not a self-oriented egotistic attitude but a sattwic attitude which is awakened.

Atma prateetih, self-confidence, is essential. Lack of self-confidence is the symptom of a weak mind and personality. Having faith in oneself is necessary so that the mind and personality do not remain weak in any way. *Manasah prabodhah*, the mind should be made receptive. Here the 'mind' referred to is the *antahkarana*, the four aspects of mind. As long as the antahkarana is not receptive to higher states, no further progress will be made.

Thus, Sage Gheranda has described four qualities: faith in the technique or teaching, faith in the guru, faith in oneself and increasing the receptivity of the antahkarana. Only when one creates this condition in one's life can the guru guide one properly to reach the state of samadhi.

What feeling or attitude is experienced in samadhi?

Swami Niranjanananda: According to *Gheranda Samhita* (7:3–4), there is only one attitude or feeling in samadhi:

*Ghataadbhinnam manah kritvaa chaikyam kuryaatparaatmani;
Samaadhim tam vijaaneeyaanmuktasanjno dashaadibhih.*

*Aham brahma na chaanyo'smi brahmaivaaham na shokabhaak;
Sachchidaanandaroopo'ham nityamuktah svabhaavavaan.*

A yogi is liberated by separating the mind from the body and making it one with the Supreme Self. This is samadhi, freedom from all (known) states of consciousness. (3)

I am not separate from Brahman, but I am Brahman only. I am not full of sorrow, but I am the form of truth-consciousness-bliss (satchidananda) and blessed with the nature of an eternally liberated soul. (4)

The attitude which the sage has expressed here does not have any *dvaita*, duality, in it. If this attitude is fully awakened in one's life and these feelings are experienced with inner one-pointedness, then that is the state of *advaita*, non-duality, the state of inner awakening or the divine state. This divine state itself has been called the eternally free nature of the Supreme self, *nityamuktah svabhaavavaan*.

How does Sage Gheranda conclude the teachings on samadhi to his disciple, King Chandakapali?

Swami Niranjanananda: Concluding his teachings, the sage tells his disciple that he has described all those techniques pertaining to the science of samadhi, by which salvation can be attained in the state of meditation. Here he discloses his secret. He has only described those techniques which, when practised in combination with meditation, make the attainment of samadhi possible. This high grade of meditation can only be practised with a spontaneous natural feeling and it should be practised in the unmani state.

Sage Gheranda says that the aim of attaining samadhi should not be restricted to the meditative state only. Rather, it is imperative to always keep in mind that the individual soul is united with Brahman. In other words, one's aim or objective should not be lost. If the aim is self-realization, then that objective should be the background of the mind twenty-four hours a day, not only brought to mind during yoga sadhana. In *Gheranda Samhita* (7:17–23) it is written:

*Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhirmuktilakshanam;
Raajayogah samaadhih syaadekaatmanyeva saadhanam;
Unmanee sahajaavasthaa sarve chaikaatmavaachakaah.*

*Jale Vishnuh sthale Vishnurvishnuh parvatamastake;
Jvaalaamaalaakule Vishnuh sarvam Vishnumayam jagat.*

*Bhoocharaah khecharaashchaamee yaavanto jeevajantavah;
Vrikshagulamalataavalleetrinaadyaah vaari parvataah;
Sarvam brahma vijaaneeyaatsarvam pashyati chaatmani.*

*Aatmaa ghatasthachaitanyamadvaitam shaashvatam param;
Ghataadvibhinnato jnaatvaa veetaraagam vivaasanam.*

*Evam mithah samaadhih syaatsarvasankalpavarjitah;
Svadehe putradaaraadibaandhaveshu dhanaadishu;
Sarveshu nirmamo bhootvaa samaadhim samavaapnuyaat.*

*Tattvam layaamritam gopyam shivoktam vividhaani cha;
Tesdaam sankshepamaadaaya kathitam muktilakshanam;
Vaachaam sankshepamaadaaya kathitam mukti lakshanam.*

*Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhi durlabhah parah;
Yam jnaatvaa na punarjanma jaayate bhoomi mandale.*

O Chanda! Thus I have explained samadhi as a symbol of liberation (mukti). This is raja yoga samadhi, synonymous with the attainment of union with atma gained in the unmani sahaja (spontaneous no-mind) states. Indeed these should be understood as samadhi. (17)

Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu. (18)

All living creatures that move on the earth or in the sky, trees, bushes, creepers, grass, oceans, mountains, etc., of this animate and inanimate universe are all Brahman. (19)

A yogi sees everyone in the self, and the self, in everyone. Considering the conscious eternal soul, *atma chaitanya*, or self inside the body as separate from the body, one becomes free from worldly attachments and passions. (20)

Thus, leaving aside all attachments with the body, son, wife, relations, wealth and possessions, attain samadhi. (21)

This layamrita tattwa (essence immersed in nectar) has been declared by Lord Shiva. This should be understood as a brief on liberation or salvation, which is difficult to attain. (22)

O Chanda! Knowing this samadhi, one is not reborn in this earthly dimension. (23)

Sage Gheranda says it should constantly be remembered that the Lord exists in everything, in the animate and inanimate worlds. The energy that is pervading this entire world should be felt in water, on earth, on the mountain tops, in forests, in every living being, in all matter of the animate and inanimate universe. When that energy is experienced, the mind does not lose sight of the objective. It should also be understood that everyone's soul or spirit is part of that eternal Supreme Self, *Paramatma* or *Ishwara*. All living things: human beings, birds, other creatures, trees, flowers, fruits, along with the 'non-living' things of this world, like water, rocks and mountains, serve as the abode of that Paramatma.

Sage Gheranda has mentioned the name of Lord Vishnu. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Mahesha (Lord Shiva) is the destroyer. All living beings from the smallest to the greatest are preserved or maintained by Lord Vishnu, and Sage Gheranda asks that Vishnu be seen pervading the entire universe. Vishnu is here seen as the preserving energy, who maintains now and in the future: he is the energy on which everything, animate and inanimate is dependent for its existence and condition.

There is no dependence on Brahma as he has already created us. There is no dependence on Shiva, as destruction or dissolution is going to take place after quite some time. There is always dependence, however, on Vishnu, because every moment, from birth to death, he is behind whatever work is going on to support and continue creation. That is why in this verse Vishnu's name has been used to celebrate that the universe itself is Vishnu and Vishnu himself is the universe.

And yet, everything in this world is perishable. There is only one form of existence which is not destructible and that is the atma or soul. The soul is immortal, eternal, while

the body is transitory. If one identifies oneself permanently with the immortal and eternal nature of the soul, then that true knowledge itself enables one to renounce all desires and become free from bondage. When all things are perishable, then with whom are one's attachments? Remaining attached to something destructible is the greatest form of ignorance.

Sage Gheranda says it is the same with samadhi: it is imperative to have the attitude of non-attachment and asceticism. Only those who are not attached to wealth, property, wife, children, friends, relatives and even their own body or mind in any way, can experience the state of samadhi. They must have vairagya bhava within, without any kind of mental tension. Only when the mind is free from pleasure and pain, and there is no antahkarana, can one merge with Brahman. Thinking of attaining samadhi without vairagya is just like building castles in the air. Education in this true knowledge is imparted by Sage Gheranda to his disciple, King Chandakapali when he says: *Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhi durlabhah parah*, I have told you about the science of samadhi, which is hard to attain and is not accessible to everyone; *Yajjnaatvaa cha purnajanma jaayate bhoomimandal*, one is not reborn after having attained this state.

The cause of rebirth is desire, and when a person has no desire in the state of samadhi, there is no antahkarana, one has merged oneself. Then the question of birth and death does not arise and one achieves one's aim or objective at this point only. In a way, it can be said that this is the secret of the science of yoga.



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APAROKSHANUBHUTI OF ADI SHANKARACHARYA

1. The Mind as Energy

(118) True pranayama is the control of all life-forces by realizing that all things such as the mind are nothing but Brahman. 15

(119) The negation of the universe is the outgoing breath. The thought 'I am Brahman' is called the incoming breath. 15

(120) The permanence of that thought thereafter is the restrained breath. This is the pranayama of the wise, while the pressing of the nose is only for the unknowing. 15

AVADHOOTA GITA OF DATTATREYA

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

(1:51) Just as when water has been poured into water, no distinction remains, so purusha and prakriti appear non-different to me. 166

(2:16) When, through constant practice, one's concentration becomes objectless, only then being divested of merits and demerits, one attains the state of complete dissolution in the Absolute through the dissolution of the object of concentration. 215

BHAGAVAD GITA

1. The Mind as Energy

(4:29) Apana is absorbed in prana (by some), and prana in apana by others. By restraining the courses of prana and apana, (the yogi is) wholly occupied in pranayama. 24

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(2:58) When one can withdraw the senses from association with objects, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs from external danger, then one is firmly fixed on the path towards wisdom. 109

(5:27–28) Shutting out all thoughts of the external environment, with the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows, having equalized the currents of prana and

apana flowing within the nostrils, having controlled the senses, mind and intellect, such a contemplative soul, intent on liberation and free from desire, fear and anger, is truly free forever. 120

5. Hatha Yoga and Higher Consciousness

(3:42) The senses are said to be superior to the body; superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect; and superior even to the intellect is the atma, the inner spirit. 151

BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

1. The Mind as Energy

(3:7:16) The intelligent soul is placed in prana, inside the prana, it pervades the prana, yet the non-intelligent are unaware of it. Prana itself has become the body of the chief master, who controls it from the inside. Thus the soul is immutable, indestructible and immortal. 22

GHERANDA SAMHITA OF SAGE GHERANDA

1. The Mind as Energy

(1:10) Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara patience is achieved. 38

3. Mind Management and Personality

(1:10) Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara patience is achieved. 70

(1:11) Through pranayama agility or lightness is achieved, through meditation self-realization and through samadhi non-involvement or detachment, and undoubtedly liberation, are achieved. 70

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(3:1–3) Sage Gheranda said: maha mudra, nabho mudra, uddiyana bandha, jalandhara bandha, moola bandha, maha bandha, maha bheda mudra, khechari mudra, vipareeta

karani mudra, yoni mudra, vajroni mudra, shakti chalini mudra, tadagi mudra, manduki mudra, shambhavi mudra, the five dharanas or concentrations, ashwini, pashinee, kaki, matangi and bhujangini are the twenty-five mudras. These enable yogis to attain siddhi, perfection or mastery. 124

(3:17) The colour of the earth element is yellow like orpiment (a yellow mineral used as a pigment), the bija or seed mantra is *Lam*, it is square in shape and Brahma is the God. Manifest it with the yogic power, retain it in the heart and hold the prana there up to five ghati (about two hours). It is known as parthivi mudra or adhodharana mudra. After mastering it, a practitioner becomes the conqueror of the earth. 126

(3:18) One who practises prithvi dharana wins over death and wanders over the earth as a siddha, a perfected person. 126

(3:21) It is an important mudra and it is imperative to keep it secret. If a practitioner describes this practice to others or discloses this technique, his siddhi is destroyed. This is the truth. 129

(3:26) This dharana should never be disclosed to an undevoted and wicked person. By doing so, siddhi is destroyed. My above statement is true. 131

(6:1) Meditation is of three types: sthoola dhyana, jyoti dhyana and sukshma dhyana. Sthoola dhyana (gross or physical meditation) is that in which one meditates on the physical form (of one's *ishta deva* or deity). Jyotirmaya dhyana (dhyana full of light) is that in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahman. Sukshma dhyana (subtle meditation) is on Brahman as bindu, as kundalini shakti. 134

(6:2–8) Focus the attention on the heart. Contemplate a vast ocean filled with nectar. In the middle there is an island full of precious jewels and the sand is made of crushed gems. On all four sides there are neepa trees laden with flowers. Surrounding these trees, like trenches on the island, are rows of flowering trees such as malati, mallika, jati, kesara, champaka, parijata and padma, and their fragrance spreads to every corner of the island.

In the middle of the island a tree by the name of kalpa vriksha exists. Its four branches represent the four Vedas. This tree is laden with beautiful fruits and flowers. All over the island the melodious voice of the cuckoo (kokila) and the humming sound of the black honeybee are heard. There is a terrace with a throne decorated with precious gems. Contemplate your ishta devata sitting on that throne. Meditate on your chosen deity according to the technique taught by your guru. Focus with one-pointedness on that form and various items like the clothing, mala, etc. that your ishta is wearing. With this technique, learned people constantly meditate on the gross or physical form of the divine or their guru. 135

(6:16) In mooladhara, kundalini exists in the form of a serpent. The soul (jivatma) resides here in the form of the flame of a lamp. Meditating here on the luminous Supreme Soul itself is tejo dhyana, i.e. jyoti dhyana. 138

(6:17) The jyoti or flame exists in between the two eyebrows and in the upper portion of the mind. Meditating on that blazing flame itself is called tejo dhyana. 138

(6:18–19) O Chanda, you have heard about tejo dhyana (jyoti dhyana), now I shall describe sukshma dhyana. If by great good fortune the kundalini shakti is awakened, it unites with the atma or soul, rises above the eye sockets and travels the raja marga, but it is not seen due to its subtleness and restlessness. 140

(6:20) Practising shambhavi mudra, a yogi should meditate (on kundalini). This is called sukshma dhyana, which is extremely secret and is not accessible even to the gods. 140

(6:21–22) Jyoti dhyana is one hundred times superior to sthoola dhyana and sukshma dhyana is one hundred thousand times superior to jyoti dhyana. O Chanda! I have told you about this extremely non-accessible dhyana yoga. One attains self-realization by perfecting supreme meditation. 140

5. Hatha Yoga and Higher Consciousness

(3:76) Steady the gaze at the eyebrow centre on the atma, and meditate. This is shambhavi mudra. It is a very secret tantric practice. 156

- (3:77) The vedas, shastras and puranas are like an ordinary woman and shambhavi mudra is like a bride. 157
- (3:78) Practitioners of this practice are themselves Adinath Narayana and Brahma, the creator of this world. 157
- (3:79) Take this saying as absolutely true, that a person knowing shambhavi mudra is Maheshwara, is Brahman in reality. 157

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

- (7:3) Detaching the mind from the body, one should make it one with the Paramatma. That is known as samadhi, which is not a state of any kind of consciousness as we understand this word. 162
- (7:5) Shambhavi and bhramari, khechari and yoni mudras respectively accomplish the four states of dhyana, nada, rasananda and laya siddhi. 175
- (7:6) The fifth is bhakti yoga and manomoorcha is the sixth, constituting raja yoga. These six are then described. 176
- (7:16) Practising manomoorchha kumbhaka, making the mind one-pointed, the yogi should meditate on atman, thus the union with paramatma (Supreme Self) is attained in samadhi. 177
- (7:7) Adopting shambhavi mudra, see the atma, soul or self, and then perceiving Brahman, fix the mind in bindu. 181
- (7:8) Merge the soul in the eternal space, merging the space with jivatma (the individual soul) and jivatma with paramatma (the supreme self). With this the yogi becomes ever blissful and enters into samadhi. 181
- (7:11) When khechari mudra is performed and the tongue is folded upward, then by this simple yogic practice, samadhi is perfected. 183
- (3:55) Yoni mudra is a top secret kriya. It is not easily accessible even to the gods. Those who achieve mastery over it by regular practice attain samadhi. 188
- (3:56) All the major sins, minor sins, etc. of the universe are erased by yoni mudra. Thus it should be practised by people seeking salvation. 188

- (7:14) In one's heart, with supreme delight and utmost devotion, one should think of the form of one's ishta deva or deity. 190
- (7:15) With this comes tears of sheer bliss, the body is thrilled, the mind becomes free of sensations, is one-pointed and experiences samadhi and manonmanee. 190
- (7:12) Assuming yoni mudra, a yogi should create the feeling of shakti in himself and unite blissfully with paramatma. 195
- (7:13) Thereafter, established in blissful oneness, he becomes one with Brahman and realizes, 'I am Brahman'. This is non-dual samadhi (called laya siddhi yoga samadhi). 195
- (7:9) Taking the air in at a slow speed, doing bhramari pranayama, expel the air very slowly on exhalation. While exhaling, a sound similar to the humming of a black bee is produced. 201
- (7:10) Wherever this nada (sound) is taking place, engage the mind there. This is (nada) samadhi arising with the bliss of 'I am That'. 201
- (7:1) Supreme yoga in the form of samadhi is attained by great good fortune. The only recipients are those who are the disciples of the guru and who receive the guru's grace. 227
- (7:2) Only that yogi should be considered as a deserving candidate for the practice of samadhi who has knowledge and experience of (spiritual) education from the guru regarding the soul or self and whose awakening of mind increases day by day. 227
- (7:3) A yogi is liberated by separating the mind from the body and making it one with the Supreme Self. This is samadhi, freedom from all (known) states of consciousness. 228
- (7:4) I am not separate from Brahman, but I am Brahman only. I am not full of sorrow, but I am the form of truth-consciousness-bliss (satchidananda) and blessed with the nature of an eternally liberated soul. 228
- (7:17) O Chanda! Thus I have explained samadhi as a symbol of liberation (mukti). This is raja yoga samadhi, synonymous with the attainment of union with atma gained in the unmani sahaja (spontaneous no-mind) states. Indeed these should be understood as samadhi. 230

- (7:18) Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu. 230
- (7:19) All living creatures that move on the earth or in the sky, trees, bushes, creepers, grass, oceans, mountains, etc. of this animate and inanimate universe are all Brahman. 230
- (7:20) A yogi sees everyone in the self, and the self, in everyone. Considering the conscious eternal soul, *atma chaitanya*, or self inside the body as separate from the body, one becomes free from worldly attachments and passions. 230
- (7:21) Thus, leaving aside all attachments with the body, son, wife, relations, wealth and possessions, attain samadhi. 230
- (7:22) This layamrita tattwa (essence immersed in nectar) has been declared by Lord Shiva. This should be understood as a brief on liberation or salvation, which is difficult to attain. 230
- (7:23) O Chanda! Knowing this samadhi, one is not reborn in this earthly dimension. 231

HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA OF YOGI SWATMARAMA

1. The Mind as Energy

- (4:60) All that can be known, all that is known and the knowledge, is called mind. When the knower and that which is known are lost together, there is no dual or second way. 14
- (4:61) All that is in this world, animate and inanimate, is the appearance of mind. When mind attains unmani (no-mind), duality is lost. 14
- (4:62) All the known objects being abandoned, mind goes into absorption or is dissolved. When the mind is dissolved, then there will be liberation (kaivalya). 15
- (4:21) Through restraining the prana, thought and counter-thought are restrained and through restraint of thought and counter-thought, prana is restrained. 19
- (4:22) Chitta has two causes, vasana (deep-rooted desires) and prana. When one of the two is destroyed or inactivated the other also will become immobile. 20

(4:23) Where mind is stilled, then the prana is suspended there, and where prana is suspended, there the mind is still.	20
(4:24) Mind and prana are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is prana.	20
(4:25) Therefore, if one is annihilated, the other is eradicated; if one is active, the other becomes active, and while they exist, all the senses are active. If they are controlled, the state of liberation (moksha) is attained.	20
(4:28) When mind is still, prana is still, then bindu is still. By bindu being held still, there is always a sattwic state which produces steadiness in the body.	28
(1:10) For those continually tempered by the heat of tapa (the three types of pain: spiritual, environmental and physical) hatha is like the hermitage giving protection from the heat. For those always united in yoga, hatha is the basis, acting like a tortoise.	29
(1:41) When perfection is attainable through siddhasana, what is the use of practising many other asanas? When the flow of prana is stabilized, the breath stops spontaneously (kevala kumbhaka) and a mindless state (unmani) arises by itself.	33

2. Hatha Yoga and the Brain

(3:105) Just as a door is opened with a key, similarly the yogi opens the door to liberation with kundalini.	47
(2:42) The breath (prana) moving in the middle passage makes the mind still. This steadiness of mind is itself called the state of manonmani – devoid of thought.	48

3. Mind Management and Personality

(2:2) When prana moves, chitta (the mental force) moves. When prana is without movement, chitta is without movement. By this steadiness of prana the yogi attains steadiness and should therefore restrain the vayu (pranic air).	67
(4:24) Mind and prana are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic	

movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is prana. 69

(1:14) In this manner, dwelling in the hermitage, being devoid of all thought (excess mentation), yoga should be practised in the way instructed by the guru. 71

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(3:127) All the pranayama methods are to be done with a concentrated mind. The wise man should not let his mind be involved in the modifications (vrittis). 106

(2:66) This (bhastrika) quickly arouses kundalini. It is pleasant and beneficial, and removes obstruction due to excess mucus accumulated at the entrance to brahma nadi (the subtle nadi within sushumna). 113

(2:67) This kumbhaka called bhastrika enables the three granthis (psychic/pranic knots) to be broken. Thus, it is the duty of the yogi to practise bhastrika. 113

(1:34) Siddhasana, padmasana, simhasana, and badrasana, these are the four main asanas. Always sit comfortably in siddhasana as it is the best. 119

5. Hatha Yoga and Higher Consciousness

(1:18) I will proceed to describe some of the asana accepted by munis such as Vashishtha and yogis such as Matsyendranath. 143

(1:49) The yogi who, seated in padmasana, inhales through the entrances of the nadis and fills them with *maruta*, or vital air, gains liberation; there is no doubt about it. 145

(2:20) When one is able to hold vayu (pranic air) according to one's will, the digestive power increases. With the nadis purified, thus the inner sound or nada awakens and one is free from disease. 147

(3:8) Adinath said they are the bestowers of the eight divine powers. They are held in high esteem by all the siddhas (perfected ones) and are difficult for even the gods to attain. 148

(4:36) Introverted, one-pointed awareness with an unblinking external gaze, this is shambhavi mudra which is preserved in the Vedas. 158

(4:37) If the yogi remains with the awareness and energy absorbed in the internal object (for concentration) while the (external) gaze is motionless, though looking one is not looking, that indeed is shambhavi. When it is given with the guru's blessing, the state of shoonyashoonya arises. That is the real state of Shiva (consciousness). 158

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

(4:2) Thus, I shall now expound the best process of samadhi which eliminates death and takes one to the greatest bliss of Brahma. 161

(4:1) Salutations to the Guru Shiva, who is regarded as nada, bindu and kala (sound, nucleus and emanating ray). One wholly devoted to them goes into the niranjana-pada, eternally stainless state. 163

(4:64) Salutations to sushumna, kundalini, the nectar flowing from the moon, to the mindless state of mind (manonmani), to the great Shakti, to the atma. 164

(4:5) As salt merges in the sea, likewise the mind and atma are considered united in samadhi. 165

(4:6) When the movement of prana is completely annihilated, then mind is reabsorbed and then samadhi is considered attained. 165

(4:7) When the twofold nature of the individual soul and cosmic soul becomes one, all desires and ideations are destroyed and that is considered samadhi. 165

(4:17) The sun and moon divide time into day and night. Sushumna is the consumer of time. This is the conveyed secret. 168

(4:10) When the maha shakti is aroused by the various asanas, pranayamas and mudras, the prana dissolves into shoonya. 169

(4:11) The sahaja state is conquered on its own (occurs by itself) in him whose remaining karmas are abandoned and who experiences the rising of shakti. 170

(4:12) When prana is flowing through sushumna, the mind is in pure shoonya. Then all the karmas of the one knowing yoga are uprooted. 170

- (4:15) How can there be inner knowledge in the mind as long as prana is alive and mind is not dead? As long as the twofold nature of mind and prana can be quiescent, liberation is attained. It is not possible for any other person. 172
- (4:63) Thus there are many various methods, depending on individual experience, of the path to samadhi, told by the early teachers and the great ones (mahatmas). 173
- (4:19) When the vayu is increased then the gastric fire (samana) should be taken along with kundalini in the aroused sushumna and blocked. 175
- (4:20) When the prana flows in the sushumna this state of manonmani (consciousness devoid of mind) is established. Therefore, other forced practices are just laborious to the yogi. 175
- (4:35) The Vedas, shastras and Puranas are like common women, but shambhavi is secret like a woman of good heritage. 179
- (4:36) Introverted, one-pointed awareness with an unblinking external gaze, this is shambhavi mudra which is preserved in the Vedas. 180
- (4:37) If the yogi remains with the chitta and prana absorbed in the internal object and gaze motionless, though looking, he is not seeing, it is indeed shambhavi mudra. When it is given by the guru's blessing, the state of shoonyashoonya arises. That is the real state of Shiva (consciousness). 180
- (4:39) With perfect concentration, the pupils fixed on the light, by raising the eyebrows up a little from the previously described (shambhavi), mind is joined and instantly unmani occurs. 182
- (4:38) Both shambhavi and khechhari states, though there is a difference in the place of concentration or influence, bring about ecstasy, absorption in void, the experience of *chit sukha* or the pleasure of consciousness. 183
- (4:43) When the prana which is in the right and left nadis moves in the middle nadi (sushumna) that is the condition for khechhari mudra. 185

- (4:44) The fire (of shakti) being swallowed (suppressed) midway between ida and pingala in that shoonya (of sushumna), is in truth the condition for khechari mudra. 185
- (4:45) The middle of the sun (pingala) and moon (ida) is the 'unsupported', in which is situated vyoma chakra or the centre of space (void). This mudra is called khechari. 185
- (4:46) In the flow from the moon (bindu) is the beloved of Shiva (consciousness). The opening of the unequalled divine sushumna should be filled from behind (by the tongue). 185
- (4:47) The sushumna being completely filled at the rear (upper palate) also is khechari. The practice of khechari mudra is followed by the state of unmani (consciousness devoid of mind). 186
- (4:14) When mind is in equanimity and (prana) vayu proceeds through sushumna, then amaroli, vajroli and sahajoli are attained. 186
- (4:41) With mind steady, eyes semi-open, gaze fixed on the nose tip, the moon (ida) and sun (pingala) suspended, without any movement (physical or mental), one attains the form of light (jyoti) which is endless and is complete, radiant, the Supreme. What more can be said? 188
- (4:42) Worship the lingam neither by day nor by night. By blocking the day and night the lingam should always be worshipped. 191
- (4:29) Mind is the ruler of the senses, prana is the ruler of the mind. Laya (dissolution) is the lord of the prana and that laya is the basis of nada. 193
- (4:30) This is called moksha (liberation), but others might not call it so. Nevertheless, when prana and mind are in laya, indescribable ecstasy is created. 193
- (4:31) When inhalation and exhalation are stopped, enjoyment of the senses annihilated, when there is no effort, and a changeless state (of mind) occurs, the yogi attains laya or absorption. 194
- (4:65) I will describe the concentration on nada as told by Gorakhnath which is attainable by even the unlearned who are unable to comprehend Thatness (tattwas). 197

- (4:66) There are one and a quarter crore (12,500,000) ways told by Sri Adinath to attain laya, but we think the one and only thing is nada anusandhana (exploration of nada). 197
- (4:67) The yogi, sitting in muktasana, concentrated in shambhavi, should listen closely to the nada heard within the right ear. 199
- (4:68) Closing the ears, nose and mouth, a clear, distinct sound is heard in the purified sushumna. 199
- (4:69) In all the yogic practices there are four stages; arambha, beginning; ghata, vessel; parichaya, increase; nishpatti, consummation. 202
- (4:70) The Brahma granthi being pierced, the feeling of bliss arises from the void; wondrous, tinkling sounds and the unstruck sounds (anahata) are heard within the body. 203
- (4:71) When the yogi experiences arambha in the void of the heart, his body becomes lustrous and brilliant with a divine smell and diseaseless. 203
- (4:72) In the second stage, when ghata is achieved, the shakti goes into the middle nadi. Being fixed in his asana the wise yogi is comparable to a divine being. 204
- (4:73) When the Vishnu granthi is pierced the greatest bliss is revealed. Then from the void the sound of the kettledrum manifests. 204
- (4:74) In the third stage is the experience of the sound of the drum. Then there is the great void and one enters the place of total perfection or siddhi. 205
- (4:75) Then the bliss of chitta being attained, natural or spontaneous ecstasy arises. Imbalance of the three humours (doshas), and pain, old age, disease, hunger, and sleep are overcome. 205
- (4:76) If the Rudra granthi is pierced, the fire of prana moves to the place of Ishwara. Then in the stage of nishpatti (consummation) is the tinkling sound of the flute resonating like a vina. 207
- (4:81) There is a plenitude of bliss in the hearts of the great yogis who remain in samadhi through nada

anusandhana (exploration of nada), which is unequalled and beyond any description, known by the one and only Gurunath.	208
(4:82) Having closed the ears with the hands, the muni should listen to the inner sound with the mind steady on that, then the state of stillness is achieved.	208
(4:83) Through sustained listening to the nada, awareness of the external sound diminishes. Thus, the yogi overcomes mental turbulence within fifteen days and feels the pleasure.	208
(4:84) When he first begins to hear sounds during practice there are various prominent nadas. Then with prolonged practice the subtlest of subtleties becomes audible.	209
(4:85) The first fruits are the sounds of the ocean, then clouds, the kettledrum and jharjhara drum. In the middle stage the conch, gong and horn.	210
(4:86) Now, reaching the inner point of conclusion, are the tinkling of bells, flute, vina and the humming of bees. Thus, the various nadas are produced and heard from the middle of the body.	211
(4:89) Whatever nada the mind initially adheres to, it becomes perfectly still in that and dissolves with it.	211
(4:90) Just as a bee drinking honey is unconcerned about the fragrance, so the mind engaged in nada is not craving for sensual objects.	212
(4:91) By the sharp goad of nada, the mind, which is like a furious elephant roaming in the garden of the senses, is controlled.	212
(4:92) When the mind ceases to be fickle and is united by fixing it in nada, it becomes immobile like a wingless bird.	212
(4:93) One who desires complete dominion of yoga should thus explore the nada with an attentive mind and abandon all thoughts.	212
(4:94) Nada is like the net which snares the deer (mind) inside. It is also like the hunter who slays the deer inside.	214
(4:95) It is like the bolt locking a horse inside, for one who is self-controlled. The yogi must therefore meditate regularly upon the nada.	214

(4:96) Just as liquid mercury is solidified by sulphur, so mind is bound by nada and freed from restlessness. Then one moves unsupported in void. 214

(4:97) Hearing the nada, mind, which is like a serpent within, becomes captivated and oblivious to all else, not moving anywhere else. 214

(4:98) As fire burns wood and both subside together, so the mind which moves with nada is absorbed in it. 215

(4:99) Just as a deer attracted by the sound of bells is easily killed by an expert archer, so is the mind silenced by an adept in nada yoga. 215

(4:100) One hears the sound of the unstruck resonance (anahata shabda); the quintessence of that sound is the (supreme) object (consciousness). The mind becomes one with that object of knowledge and dissolves therein. That is the supreme state of Vishnu (padam). 215

(4:101) The conception of akasha (the substratum of sound) exists as long as the sound is heard. The soundless, which is the Supreme reality, is called the Supreme atma. 216

(4:102) Whatever is heard of the nature of the mystical nada is indeed shakti. That in which all the elements (panchatattwa) find dissolution, that is the formless being, the Supreme Lord. 216

(4:77) This is called raja yoga, when there is one element in the mind or chitta. The yogi becomes Ishwara, being the creator and destroyer. 217

(4:78) Whether there is liberation or not, nevertheless there is pleasure. The pleasure arising from laya is derived from raja yoga. 217

(4:80) In my opinion, contemplation on the eyebrow centre leads to a mindless state immediately. It is a suitable method even for those with less intellect to attain the state of raja yoga. The laya attained through nada gives immediate experience. 218

(4:103) All the processes of hatha and laya yoga are but the means to attain raja yoga (samadhi). One who attains raja yoga is victorious over time (death). 219

(4:104) Tattwa is the seed, hatha is the soil, total desirelessness (vairagya) is the water. By these three the wish-fulfilling tree (kalpa vriksha) which is the unmani avastha (mindless state), immediately sprouts forth. 220

(4:8) Who really knows the magnitude of raja yoga? Through the guru's words, inner knowledge, liberation and perfection fructify. 221

(4:9) Without the compassion of the true guru, renunciation is impossible, perception of the truth inaccessible and sahaja samadhi unobtainable. 221

(4:114) While the prana does not flow in the middle passage (of sushumna), while the bindu is not steadied by restraining the prana, while mind does not reflect spontaneous meditation, then those who speak of spiritual knowledge are only indulging in boastful and false tales. 223

(4:16) Staying in the most suitable place, having found out how to penetrate sushumna and make the prana flow through the middle passage, it should be blocked in the brahmarandhra, the centre of higher consciousness. 225

HATHARATNAVALI OF SRINIVASA BHATTA MAHAYOGINDRA

1. The Mind as Energy

(4:44) Just as camphor dissolves in fire and salt in water, in the same way the mind also merges (in Brahman). 17

(4:1) Just as salt dissolved in water becomes one with it, so do spirit (atman) and individual mind (manas) become one and this blending is known as samadhi. 17

(2:60) Prana and apana, nada and bindu having attained union through moolabandha, the yogi attains perfection in yoga. There is no doubt about it. 24

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(3:39) The yogi who, sitting in padmasana, holds the air inhaled through the nostrils, is (surely to be) liberated. There is no doubt about it. 108

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

(4:3) When the mind becomes motionless as a result of (deep) concentration, that is called samadhi. 161

(4:2) In this stage (samadhi), jivatma and paramatma are held in the state of equilibrium, in which there is complete cessation of mental activity. 167

(4:9) In the beginning of the practice, loud and voluminous sounds of various types are heard. As the practice progresses, sharper and subtler sounds are heard. 211

PRASHNOPANISHAD

1. The Mind as Energy

(2:13) All that exists within the three worlds is under your direction. Oh Prana, grant us prosperity and knowledge and care for us like a mother cares for her son. 13

SHIVA SAMHITA

1. The Mind as Energy

(3:49) Through the regulation of breath the wise practitioner surely destroys all of his karmas, whether acquired in this life or in the past. 26

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(3:63) At that time let the great yogi practise the fivefold dharana forms of concentration on Vishnu, by which command over the five elements is obtained, and fear of injuries from any one of them removed. 124

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

(5:111) He who always contemplates on the hidden ajna lotus, at once destroys all the karmas of his past life without any opposition. 171

(3:60) After this, through practice, the yogi reaches the parichaya avastha. In this state, the vayu does not move through the moon and sun (ida and pingala) but remains steady in sushumna. 206

(3:61) This takes place when one has control of kriya shakti or pingala and has pierced the six chakras. Then the yogi sees the three-fold effect of karma. 206

SHIVA SWARODAYA

2. Hatha Yoga and the Brain

(v.270) Millions of other powers are useless before the strength of the swara. One who has this knowledge is always powerful both in this world and the next. 54

6. Beyond the Mind: Hatha Yoga and Samadhi

(v. 138) Sandhya is not the external sandhya when day meets night, it is that period when the two opposite pranas meet. 168

YOGA SUTRAS OF SAGE PATANJALI

4. Hatha Yoga and Meditation

(2:46) Steady and comfortable should be the posture. 99

(2:53) The mind becomes fit for concentration (by the practice of pranayama). 111

Glossary

Adinath – literally means the ‘first lord’; primordial guru of all; cosmic consciousness; name of Lord Shiva given by the Nath sect of yogis; first guru of the Nath yogis

Advaita – non-duality

Agneyi dharana – concentration on the fire element; one of the five concentration practices described in *Gheranda Samhita* under the category of mudra.

Agni dharana – see Agneyi dharana.

Agni tattwa – fire element; fire principle. See Mahabhoota.

Ahamkara – faculty of ego, awareness of the existence of ‘I’.

Ajapa – involuntary, unconscious repetition of the same thing, applied especially to the mantra or sound made in breathing, which is ‘recited’ 21,600 times every 24 hours.

Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with breath.

Ajna chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated at the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column in the mid-brain; seat of intuition, higher knowledge; third eye.

Akasha tattwa – space element; ether principle.

Akashi dharana – concentration on the element of space or ether; one of the five concentration practices described in *Gheranda Samhita* under the category of mudra.

Akashi mudra – awareness of the inner space; practice of the external stage of dharana; gazing into space with the head tilted back. See Mudra.

Amara – immortal.

Amaroli – drinking of one's own urine in order to detoxify the body and develop immunity, stamina and vitality.

Ambhasi dharana – concentration on the water element; one of the five concentration practices described in *Gheranda Samhita* under the category of mudra.

Amrita – the nectar of immortality which descends from bindu.

Anahata – 'unstruck' or 'unbeaten' sound heard by yogis. See Anahata nada.

Anahata chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the sternum; associated physically with the cardiac plexus, heart and lungs, mentally with emotion, especially love, and spiritually with *atma*, the spirit.

Anahad, anahata nada – transcendental cosmic sound experienced only in the higher states of meditation; sound which can not be grasped or heard externally; unproduced or unstruck sound.

Ananda – pure bliss; natural state of consciousness.

Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss; the innermost wrapper or sheath of the embodied spirit.

Anandopaya – another name for anupaya. See Anupaya. See Upaya.

Anavopaya – the first or most gross of the four upaya sadhanas of tantra; the means by which the empirical individual (anu) uses his/her instruments (karanas) of senses, mind and energy for self-realization; also known as kriyopaya. See Upaya.

Anima siddhi – the power of wilfully making the body small like an atom. See Ashta siddhi. See Siddhi.

Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter; the sphere of existence created by food, maintained by food and which ultimately becomes food, i.e. the body.

Antahkarana – literally means ‘inner tool’, inner organ of consciousness, consisting of: ahamkara, manas, buddhi and chitta.

Antar mouna – inner silence; meditative technique belonging to the fifth step of raja yoga (pratyahara).

Anu – atomic; fine; minute; limited, conditioned or empirical individual.

Anugraha – divine grace; kindness; assistance.

Anupaya – the fourth upaya sadhana of tantra; attainment of spiritual experience without need of effort; the grace which is attained by nominal effort. Also known as anandopaya because it instills instant bliss.

Anusandhana – enquiry; exploration; investigation.

Apana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus, it is located between the navel and the perineum; it flows downward and controls elimination and reproduction.

Apara – ordinary; opposite of para; material dimension; worldly knowledge.

Apas tattwa – water element, water principle.

Arambha – beginning.

Arambha avastha – beginning stage; according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the first state of hearing the inner nada attained after piercing Brahma granthi. See Avastha. See Brahma granthi.

Ardha padmasana – half-lotus pose; classical meditative posture.

Ardhanarishwara – form of Shiva which is half-male and half-female; Shiva and Shakti united in one form; the personality in which the male and female qualities are balanced.

Ashta siddhi – eight siddhis, paranormal or supernatural accomplishments, that are listed in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali and the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Swami Swatmarama. See Siddhi. See Anima siddhi. See Laghima siddhi. See Prapti siddhi. See Prakamya siddhi. See Mahima siddhi. See Ishitvam siddhi. See Vashitva siddhi. See Garima siddhi.

Ashwini mudra – horse gesture; a yogic practice to redirect energy upwards; mudra involving contraction of the anal sphincter.

Atma, atman – the self beyond mind and body; principle of life, highest reality, Supreme Consciousness, spirit, soul.

Atma anubhuti – perception, understanding of the self

Atma chaitanya – consciousness of the eternal soul; self-realization.

Atma darshan – glimpse of Supreme Consciousness; vision of the soul; understanding of the self beyond mind and body; self-realization.

Atma roopi Ishwara – God in the form of the soul or spirit.

Atma shakti – the power of the atma; spiritual energy.

Avastha – state of consciousness or condition of the mind; states of mind in nada yoga practice according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

Bandha – psycho-muscular energy locks which close the pranic exits (like throat, anus etc); psychic locks that concentrate the flow of energy in the body at one point or plexus.

Basti – one of the shatkarmas; yogic enema.

Bhagavad Gita – literally ‘divine song’; Lord Krishna’s discourse to his disciple Arjuna delivered on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the commencement of the great Mahabharata war; one of the source books of Hindu philosophy, containing the essence of the Upanishads and yoga.

Bhakta – devotee.

Bhakti bhava – the feeling, state of mind or condition of devotion.

Bhakti yoga – branch of yoga in which emotional energy is channelled towards a divine relationship; a systematic path with nine stages which expand, strengthen, and purify the emotions.

Bhasmasura – a demon.

Bhastrika pranayama – bellows breathing; pranayama in which the breath is forcibly drawn in and out through the

nose in equal proportions, like the pumping action of the bellows.

Bhati – light, splendour; perception; knowledge.

Bhava – feeling; condition; attitude; inclination or disposition of mind.

Bhoota – element; the five major elements (mahabhootas or tattwas) are earth, water, fire, air and space.

Bhramari pranayama – humming bee breath; a breathing technique in which a sound like a honey bee is made.

Bhrumadhya – trigger point for ajna chakra located at the eyebrow centre.

Bhrumadhya drishti – a form of concentrated gazing (trataka) in which the attention is being fixed between the eyebrows.

Bhujangasana – the cobra pose, a backward bending asana.

Bhujangini mudra – cobra respiration; practice in which air is drawn into the stomach through the mouth, held there for some time, then released by belching.

Bija – seed; seed state; source, origin.

Bija mantra – seed sound; a basic mantra or syllable.

Bindu – seed, source, drop; point of potential energy and consciousness, used in kriya yoga; the basis from which emanated the first principle according to the tantra shastra; nucleus; psychic centre located in the brain; in tantra and hatha yoga it also represents a drop of semen.

Brahma granthi – psychic/muscular ‘knot’ of creation, situated in mooladhara chakra, symbolizing material and sensual attachment.

Brahman – etymologically ‘ever expanding, limitless consciousness’; name of Supreme Consciousness or cosmic intelligence according to Vedanta philosophy; God as creator; monistic concept of absolute reality.

Brahmarandhra – crown of the head; the fontanelle; opening in the crown of the head through which the soul is said to escape on leaving the body.

Brahmi vritti – mental modification that leads to identification with the witnessing consciousness or Brahman;

spiritual aspect of the vrittis, the self-aware, individual consciousness.

Buddhi – discerning, discriminating aspect of mind; aspect of mind closest to pure consciousness; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument.

Chakra – circle, wheel or vortex; pranic/psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis) in the body; the seven major chakras for descent of divine energy or for human evolution are sahasrara, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.

Chandra – moon; representing the mental energy. See Ida nadi.

Chandra shakti – mental force, ida nadi.

Chedan – cutting; piercing; dividing.

Chhandogya Upanishad – name of an Upanishad from the *Sama Veda* teaching the origin and significance of the mantra *Aum*.

Chidakasha – the space of consciousness; the inner space visualized in meditation behind the closed eyes or in the region of ajna chakra.

Chin mudra – psychic gesture of consciousness; a hand mudra. See Mudra.

Chit – thought; perception; understanding; in Vedanta, one of the three attributes of the ultimate principle.

Chitrini nadi – the second of three energy currents lying within sushumna nadi, which are dormant until the balancing of ida and pingala nadis allow sushumna to flow.

Chitta – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; thinking, concentration, attention, enquiry; storehouse of memory or samskaras; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument.

Chitta shakti – the power of pure consciousness; mental force governing the subtle dimensions.

Chitta vritti – manifestations of the mind, disposition or state of the mind; inclination.

Dakini – the goddess of the skin, of the sense of touch who resides in mooladhara chakra.

Dasya bhava – feeling, attitude or way of relating to God as a servant.

Deva – being of light; divine being.

Dhairyam – the fourth limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; constancy; steadiness; calmness; patience.

Dharana – practice of concentration or complete attention; sixth stage of ashtanga yoga described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as holding or binding the mind to one point.

Dhauti – one of the shatkarmas; cleansing techniques for the digestive system, chest and head.

Dhyana – spontaneous state of meditation; one-pointedness of mind through concentration on either a form, thought or sound; absorption in the object of meditation; seventh stage of Sage Patanjali's ashtanga yoga.

Dohan – milking; massage of the tounge in 'milking' movements.

Dosha – three humours of the body described in ayurveda: mucus (kapha), bile (pitta) and wind (vata). Their imbalance prevents the flow of energy in sushumna nadi.

Dridhata – the second limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; fixed, firm, strong, certain, unshaken.

Dvaita – duality.

Ekagrata – one-pointedness of mind, fourth of the five states of mind where pure sattwa guna predominates enabling concentrated or meditative states of mind.

Garima siddhi – the power of making the body heavy at will. See Ashta siddhi. See Siddhi.

Ghata – mud pot; vessel.

Ghata avastha – the second state of hearing the inner nada according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*; state of nada attained when shakti enters the chitrini nadi within sushumna.

Gheranda, Sage – author of *Gheranda Samhita*, a classical yoga text which describes seven limbs of yoga.

Gheranda Samhita – traditional text on hatha yoga by Sage Gheranda. It explains seven limbs (saptanga) of yoga:

shatkarma, asana, mudra, pratyahara, pranayama, dhyana and samadhi.

Gorakhnath, Yogi – founder of the Nath sect; author of *Gorakhsha Samhita*.

Granthi – psychic knot; the three granthis on the sushumna nadi hinder the upward passage of kundalini, viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra granthi. See Brahma granthi. See Rudra granthi. See Vishnu granthi.

Guna – quality; the three gunas, qualities or aspects of prakriti are sattwa, rajas and tamas.

Guru – one who dispels the darkness caused by ignorance (avidya); teacher of the science of ultimate reality who by the light of his own atma can dispel darkness, ignorance and illusion from the mind and enlighten the consciousness of a devotee/disciple; preceptor.

Halasana – the plough pose; an inverted posture.

Ham – bija mantra of the space element and vishuddhi chakra.

Hatha yoga – a system of yoga specifically utilizing practices for bodily purification; yoga of attaining physical and mental purity and balancing the prana (energy) in ida and pingala nadis so that sushumna nadi opens, enabling samadhi experiences.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika – a major classical text on hatha yoga compiled by Yogi Swatmarama, usually translated as ‘Light on Hatha Yoga’.

Hatharatnavali – a late medieval treatise on hatha yoga and tantra by Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogindra.

Hiranyagarbha – cosmic mind or subtle body; Brahman; golden seed of the unity of life; it is said that Brahman alone is creating himself from his own substance.

Hrid – interior of the body; the heart; core.

Hridayakasha – psychic space of the heart centre where the creative hues of emotion are observed; experienced between manipura and vishuddhi chakras, associated with anahata chakra.

Ichha shakti– creative force or that desire which is the first manifestation of the greater mind.

Ida nadi – a major pranic channel running from the left side of mooladhara chakra to the left side of ajna chakra, governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain. The ida energy flow criss-crosses the spine through the major chakras between mooladhara and ajna, conducting the passive aspect of prana manifesting as the mental force, lunar force or chitta shakti. Also called chandra nadi as the lunar energy flows through it.

Indriya – sense organ; power of the senses.

Ishitvam siddhi – power to wilfully create and destroy. See Siddhi. See Ashta siddhi.

Ishta deva, ishta devata – personal deity, one's favourite symbol of the Supreme.

Ishwara – higher reality; God; non-changing, indestructible principle or quality.

Ishwara tattwa – the cosmic causal body, the divine essence.

Jagrat – the waking state; dimension of consciousness, related to the senses and the phenomenal material universe.

Jala tattwa – water element, water principle.

Jalandhara bandha – throat lock; practice in which the chin rests forward upon the upper sternum.

Jignasu sannyasa – stage of aspirant, spiritual seeker; preliminary stage of sannyasa.

Jiva – principle of life; individual or personal soul; living being.

Jivanmukti – final liberation in the present state of life.

Jivatma, jivatman – individual or personal soul.

Jnana, jnanam – knowledge, cognition, wisdom; higher knowledge derived from meditation or from inner experience.

Jnana mudra – psychic gesture of knowledge; a hand mudra. See Mudra.

Jnanendriya – organ of sense perceptions and knowledge; five in number, viz. ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin.

Jnani guru – guru of knowledge and wisdom.

Jnanopaya – another name for shaktopaya, one of the four upaya sadhanas of tantra. See Shaktopaya.

Jyoti dhyana – dhyana, meditation on light, on the brilliant flame form of Brahman.

Kaivalya – final liberation; highest state of samadhi; that state of consciousness which is beyond duality.

Kaki mudra – the crow's beak; a mudra in which air is inhaled through pursed lips.

Kala – one of the five limiting aspects of energy, restricting the creative power of individual consciousness and body; emanating ray; primal shakti; the power through which creation comes into manifestation.

Kali – primal manifestation of shakti; wife of Shiva; deity, divine mother; destroyer of time, space and object, i.e. ignorance.

Kalpa vriksha – wish-fulfilling tree; a psychic centre closely linked with anahata chakra.

Kapal – cranium; forehead.

Kapalbhati – frontal brain cleansing breath; one of the six major cleansing techniques, shatkarmas of hatha yoga; process of purifying the frontal region of the brain by breathing rapidly through the nostrils with emphasis on exhalation.

Kapalshodhana – another name for kapalbhati. See Kapalbhati.

Kapha – mucus, phlegm, one of the three humours (doshas) described in ayurveda. See Dosha.

Karmakshetra the field, or sphere, of action.

Karmendriya – motor organ; there are five physical organs of action, viz. vocal cords, hands, feet, genital organ and anus.

Kashmir Shaivism – a school of tantra based on the Trikastra, a division of Shaivism found in North India.

Kati chakrasana – waist rotating pose; a dynamic spinal twist.

Kaula – union of Shiva and Shakti.

Kaushitaki Upanishad – one of the Upanishads. See Upanishads.

Kevala kumbhaka – spontaneous retention of breath.

Khechari mudra – literally ‘the attitude of moving in space’; tongue lock; a hatha yoga practice in which the elongated tongue passes back into the pharynx to stimulate the flow of life-giving nectar (amrita), whereas in the milder raja yoga form the tongue is inserted in, or folded backwards, towards, the upper cavity of the palate.

Koormasana – the tortoise pose; a forward bending asana.

Kosha – sheath or body; a dimension of experience and existence.

Krishna – literally ‘black’ or ‘dark’; eighth incarnation of Vishnu; avatara who descended in the dwapara yuga. He is perhaps the most celebrated hero in Hindu mythology and seems to be a historical figure. To uphold dharma he orchestrated the Mahabharata war. His teachings to his friend and disciple Arjuna during that war are immortalized in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Kriya – action; cleansing practice (shatkarma); practice of kriya yoga.

Kriya shakti – power or faculty of acting.

Kriya yoga – practices of kundalini yoga designed to speed the evolution of humanity.

Kriyopaya – another name for anavopaya, one of the four upaya sadhanas of tantra. See anavopaya.

Kumbhaka – internal or external retention of the breath.

Kundalini – the evolutionary energy in a human being; spiritual energy; Devi described as the potential energy of a human being dormant in mooladhara chakra, which, when awakened, awakens the chakras, resulting in progressive enlightenment.

Kundalini yoga – path of yoga which awakens the dormant spiritual force, kundalini. See Kundalini.

Laghima siddhi – power of wilfully making the body light. See Ashta siddhi. See Siddhi.

Lalana chakra – a minor chakra at the back of the throat above the palate.

Lam – bija mantra of the earth element and of mooladhara chakra.

Laya – dissolution; union, fusion.

Layamrita tattwa – essence immersed in nectar.

Linga sharira – subtle or psychic body that becomes particularly active during the dream state by creating a world of its own; consists of the three sheaths: intelligence (vijñanamaya kosha), mind (manomaya kosha) and vital energy (pranamaya kosha).

Loka – locationless dimension; plane of existence.

Madhyama – intermediate sound, the second stage of nada yoga in which the meditator perceives nada and electromagnetic pulsation within the entire body. See Nada yoga.

Maha bandha – the great lock; a combination of jalandhara bandha, uddiyana bandha and moola bandha, practised with external breath retention.

Maha bheda mudra – the great separating attitude; a whole body mudra with profound influence at a pranic level. It combines jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandhas along with rotation of awareness through specific chakras.

Maha mudra – literally ‘great attitude’; in this sitting posture the apertures at the top and bottom of the trunk are held fast and sealed. In kriya yoga it combines moola bandha, akashi mudra, khechari mudra and shambhavi mudra along with rotation of awareness through specific nadis and chakras.

Maha shakti – the great energy; kundalini.

Maha vedha mudra – the great piercing attitude; a mudra performed from padmasana, the lotus pose; its purpose is to pierce mooladhara chakra and to channel the kundalini energy upwards.

Mahabhoota – the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth).

Mahasamadhi final liberation experienced on the departure of the spirit from the body; death. See Samadhi.

Mahat – greater mind; the total mind which includes manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara; universal intellect.

Mahima siddhi – the power of wilfully making the body large. See Ashta siddhi. See Siddhi.

Mala – garland; rosary used to aid mantra repetition.

Manas shakti – mental energy.

Manas tattwa – element representing the mind.

Manasik – mental.

Mandala – circular symbolic pictorial depiction of cosmic power and/or the human psyche.

Manduki mudra – gesture of the frog; an advanced variation of nasikagra drishti.

Manipura chakra – literally, ‘city of jewels’; psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the navel; associated with the solar plexus and digestive organs and mentally with willpower; source of vitality and energy.

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body; mental sphere of life and awareness.

Manonmani – absence of individual mind.

Mantra – words of power; sound vibrations which liberate the mind when repeated.

Matsyasana – fish pose; a backward bending asana performed from padmasana.

Matsyendranath – first human guru of the hatha yoga tradition; guru of Yogi Gorakhnath.

Maya – means by which Brahman creates the phenomenal world; power of creation; illusive power; in Vedanta philosophy, the two powers of maya are: 1. the power of veiling, and 2. the power of projection; in Samkhya philosophy, another name for Prakriti.

Mirabai – (born 1502) Indian poet saint devoted to Lord Krishna.

Moksha – liberation from the cycles of birth and death and the illusion of maya.

Moola bandha – perineum contraction; contraction of the perineal body in the male and the cervix in the female body; technique used for locating and awakening mooladhara chakra.

Mooladhara chakra – the lowest psychic/pranic centre in the human body; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; associated physically with the coccygeal plexus, excretory and reproductive organs and mentally with the instinctive nature; spiritually, it is the seat of kundalini.

Moorchha pranayama – swooning or fainting breath; a tranquillizing pranayama.

Mudra – literally ‘gesture’; psychic, emotional, devotional, and aesthetic gestures; attitudes of energy intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force.

Muktananda, Swami – disciple of Swami Nityananda; founder of the Siddha Yoga movement in the mid-twentieth century.

Muktasana – another name for sukhasana, easy pose; a cross-legged meditation asana.

Mukti – release, liberation, final absolution of the consciousness from the chain of birth and death and from the illusion of maya.

Murti – body; form, shape, figure, statue; symbol; idol.

Nabho mudra – the sky or space mudra; a simple form of khechari mudra used in raja yoga.

Nada – sound; subtle sound or vibration created by the union of the Shiva and Shakti tattwas; the first manifestation of the unmanifest Absolute.

Nada yoga – the process of penetrating deeper and deeper into the nature of one’s own reality via listening to subtle inner sound.

Nadi – flow; a river or channel of energy; psychic current; subtle channel in the pranic body, conducting the flow of shakti; comparable to the meridians of acupuncture.

Nadi shodhana pranayama – nadi purification; a pranayama designed to purify and balance the two main energy flows of the body, ida and pingala nadis.

Nama – name; word; sound in the form of language.

Narayana – epithet of Vishnu, the supporter of life.

Nasikagra drishti – nosetip gazing; a practice to stimulate mooladhara chakra.

Nataraja – name of Shiva during his cosmic dance, literally ‘Lord of dance’.

Nath – name of an important sect of hatha yogis; literally lord or master.

Nauli – abdominal massaging; one of the shatkarmas in which the rectus abdominii muscles are contracted and isolated vertically.

Neti – one of the shatkarmas; ‘nasal cleansing’ with saline water (jala neti), a waxed string (sutra neti) or other elements.

Nidra – fourth instinct; deep sleep; isolation from the mind and senses; disassociation.

Nirbija – seedless, without any seed.

Nirbija samadhi – final state of samadhi in which there is absorption without seed; total dissolution.

Nirguna – without quality or attribute; formless.

Nirvana – cessation of suffering; final liberation or emancipation in Buddhist thought.

Nirvikalpa samadhi – state in which the mind ceases to function and only pure consciousness remains; superconscious state where mental modifications cease to exist, resulting in transcendence of the manifest world.

Nishpatti avastha – fourth and final state of hearing the inner nada according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, equated with nirvikalpa samadhi which renders one a jivanmukta.

Nityamuktah svabhavavan – one’s own true nature as eternally free.

Nivritti marga – the path of introversion, return to the source; path free from modifications of consciousness (vrittis).

Padadhirasana – breath balancing pose.

Padmasana – lotus pose; classical meditative posture.

Pancha – five.

Pancha dharana – five kinds of concentration on the five elements.

Pancha prana – five major divisions of the pranic energy located in the physical body.

Para – supreme dimension, the atma, soul or self.

Para kshetra – the supreme region.

Para nada – transcendental sound. The fourth stage of nada yoga, para nada is a quality of the psyche or the soul. It is a sound without any vibration or a sound of infinite wave length and is heard only in samadhi or deep meditation.

Paramatma – cosmic soul or consciousness; Supreme Self; the atma of the entire universe; God.

Parichaya avastha – state of increase, the third state of nada yoga according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

Parthivi dharana – concentration on the earth element; one of the five concentration practices described by Sage Gheranda under the category of mudra; also called prithvi dharana or adhodharana mudra.

Parvati – goddess and consort of Lord Shiva, mother of Ganesha and Kartikeya.

Pashinee mudra – folded psychic attitude; a mudra performed in an inverted posture to induce pratyahara, balance and tranquillity.

Pashyanti – the third stage of nada yoga; meditation in which one perceives the entire universe as being sound.

Pawanmuktasana – a group of asanas that remove any blockages preventing free flow of energy in the body and mind; three groups of asanas: the anti-rheumatic group, the digestive/abdominal group, and the energy block releasing group (shakti bandhas).

Pingala nadi – a major pranic channel in the body which conducts the dynamic pranic force manifesting as prana shakti from the right side of mooladhara chakra, criss-crossing the spine through the major chakras to the right side of ajna chakra; associated with the mundane realm of experience and externalized awareness; also called surya nadi as the solar energy flows through it.

- Pitta** – bile, one of the three humours (doshas) described in ayurveda. See Dosha.
- Pooraka** – the first stage of pranayama; breathing in.
- Prajna** – knowledge with awareness; intuition; knowledge of the one without a second.
- Prakamya siddhi** – the power of unobstructed fulfillment of desire. See Ashta siddhi. See Siddhi.
- Pramana** – knowledge based on direct sensation or cognition.
- Prana** – vital energy force sustaining life and creation, permeating the whole of creation and existing in both the macrocosmos and microcosmos.
- Prana nirodha** – control of prana in the form of vayu, the vital airs.
- Prana shakti** – energy; dynamic solar force governing the dimension of matter; energy flow related to externalization of mind; the force of prana.
- Prana tattwa** – element representing the vital or life-giving force.
- Pranamaya kosha** – energy sheath, or vital pranic body; the sheath covering the self which is composed of pranic vibration and the rhythm of pranic forces. See Kosha.
- Pranava** – another word for the sacred syllable *Aum* or *Om*, the primal sound vibration, the symbol of the soul or self.
- Pranava dhyana** – meditation on the mantra *Aum* or *Om*.
- Pranic** – pertaining to prana.
- Pranotthana** – awakening of the pranas in the different nadis and chakras; a stage of awakening preparatory to kundalini awakening.
- Prapti siddhi** – the capacity to reach anywhere. See Ashta Siddhi. See Siddhi.
- Prateetih** – faith; one of the qualities essential for attainment of samadhi, as given by Sage Gheranda in the *Gheranda Samitha*. Swaguru prateetih (faith in guru), vidya prateetih (faith in the method, technique or knowledge applied) and atma prateetih (self-confidence) are the aspects of faith described.

Pratyahara – restraining the sensory and motor organs; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; training the senses to follow the mind within; fifth stage of ashtanga yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Pratyaksha – the sixth limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; inner perception; inner acceptance; present before the eyes, visible, perceptible, clear.

Pratyaya – seeds or impressions in the field of consciousness which do not disappear even in the first stages of samadhi; content of mind.

Pravritti marga – the path of extroversion, engaging in modification of consciousness (vrittis).

Premi bhava – attitude or way of relating to God as a lover.

Prithvi dharana – concentration on the earth element. Also called parthivi dharana or adhodharana mudra.

Prithvi tattwa – earth element, earth principle.

Puranas – eighteen ancient texts containing the earliest mythology of the tantric and vedic traditions, consisting of legends and mythological narrations dealing with creation, recreation and the genealogies of sages and rulers.

Purusha – literally, 'the one who lives in the city (of the body)'; the soul; pure consciousness according to Samkhya philosophy, undefiled and unlimited by contact with prakriti or matter; can also refer to a man or human being.

Raja yoga – the supreme yoga; union through control of the mental processes and concentration of mind; the most authoritative text is Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* which contain ashtanga yoga, the eightfold path.

Rajas – one of the three gunas or attributes; dynamism; state of activity; creativity combined with full ego involvement. See Guna.

Rama – the seventh avatara of Vishnu and embodiment of dharma, hero of the epic Ramayana; a heroic and virtuous king.

Rechaka – the process of exhalation in pranayama; emptying of the lungs.

Rishi – seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates on the Self.

Rudra granthi – literally ‘knot of Rudra (Shiva)’; psychic knot within ajna chakra which symbolizes attachment to siddhis or higher mental attributes. As the psychic block is overcome, the sense of personal identity ceases to block one’s identification with the cosmic consciousness. See Granthi.

Rudra – howling energy; a form of Shiva; one who acquires a fierce form.

Sabija samadhi – the state of samadhi in which the seeds of desire remain in the mind, thus the seed of actions (karma) is not destroyed.

Sadhaka – one who practises sadhana; a spiritual aspirant.

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly.

Saguna – with qualities (gunas).

Sahaja – spontaneous, natural; true.

Sahajoli mudra – practice of vajroli by a woman, involving contraction of the lower urinary muscles for the stimulation of swadhisthana chakra.

Sahasrara chakra – ‘thousand petalled lotus;’ abode of Shiva or super-consciousness; highest chakra or psychic centre, it symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms and is located at the crown of the head.

Sakhya bhava – attitude or way of relating to God as a friend.

Sama – equanimity.

Samadhi – the culmination of meditation, state of oneness of mind with the object of concentration and the universal consciousness; self-realization; the eighth stage of raja yoga.

Samana vayu – one of the five pancha pranas or vayus, it is located between the navel and the diaphragm; it flows from side to side and controls the digestion.

Samkhya – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy. Attributed to Sage Kapila, Samkhya is a spiritual science based on the division of all existence into the two eternal

principles of purusha and prakriti, and the twenty-three elements of creation; the philosophical basis of the yoga system.

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype; the impressions which form the conditioning of one's nature causing one to react or respond in a certain way.

Sandhya –early morning or evening twilight; union; division.

Sanga tyaga – renunciation of company or association.

Sankalpa – positive resolve; purpose, aim, intention; willpower.

Sankalpa shakti – the power of one-pointed awareness, one-pointed desire, one-pointed will.

Sanskrit – language of the vedic civilization, still used in India and the yogic culture.

Sapta sadhana – the seven means or practices described by Sage Gheranda in the *Gheranda Samhita*, a traditional text on hatha yoga.

Sarvangasana – shoulder stand pose; an inverted posture.

Sat – true; that which really exists; in Vedanta one of the three attributes of the ultimate reality, Brahman.

Satchidananda – literally 'truth-consciousness-bliss'; the nature of Supreme Consciousness.

Sati – virtuous or good woman; female ascetic; wife of Shiva.

Sattwa – one of the three gunas, or attributes of nature; state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium, steadiness and purity.

Sattwic – pertaining to sattwa.

Satyananda Yoga – an internationally renowned school of yoga founded by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in the mid-twentieth century, in which the various branches of yoga have been integrated and the practices systematized for application to modern lifestyles; also called Bihar Yoga.

Savikalpa samadhi – a kind of samadhi in which the mind still retains its material impressions (distinctions such

as between subject and object, or of the knower and the known.

Shabda – sound; perceptible sound; object of the sense of hearing and property of space; word.

Shakti – primal energy; manifest consciousness; power, ability, capacity, strength, energy; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Hindu mythology Shakti is often symbolized as a divine woman.

Shakti chalini mudra – a mudra in which energy is moved through pranayama combined with bandha and nauli.

Shaktopaya – one of the four upaya sadhanas of tantra; means of approaching the divine through shakti; also known as *jnanopaya* because it uses the aspect of jnana.

Shambhavi mudra – eyebrow centre gazing; psychic attitude focused on Shiva (Supreme Consciousness).

Shambhavopaya – one of the four upaya sadhanas of tantra; direct approach to Shiva (Shambhu); sudden emergence of Shiva consciousness without any effort – just a mere hint that Shiva is one's essential self is enough; concentration on the idea of pure consciousness or the shiva tattwa in order to attain self-realization.

Shambhu – name for Shiva.

Shankha – conch.

Shankhaprakshalana – literally 'cleaning the conch'; a cleansing technique (shatkarma) of hatha yoga that uses saline water to clean the stomach (which is shaped like a conch) and the small and large intestines.

Shankaracharya – originally the name of a celebrated teacher of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, he was an enlightened sage who is said to have established the Dashnami order of sannyasa and authored a large number of scriptural works.

Shashankasana – the hare pose; a forward bending asana performed from vajrasana.

Shashank bhujangasana – the striking cobra pose; a dynamic asana flexing the spine backward and forward.

Shastra – an authoritative treatise on any subject, particularly science and religion; sacred book.

- Shatkarma** – the six hatha yoga techniques of purification: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka.
- Shiva** – state of pure consciousness, individual and cosmic, original source of yoga. Lord of yogis; auspicious, benevolent one; name of the god of the Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction; destroyer of the ego and duality.
- Shiva Samhita** – Sanskrit text enumerating the concepts and principles essential to the practice of yoga; classical text on hatha yoga.
- Shivalinga** – black oval-shaped stone; symbol of Lord Shiva; symbol of consciousness.
- Shodhanam** – first limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; purification.
- Shoonya** – void, state of transcendental consciousness; space behind the eyebrow centre.
- Siddha** – an adept or perfected person; one who has developed his/her psychic and pranic capacity to the point of mastery.
- Siddha yoni asana** – classical meditation posture, the male equivalent is siddhasana.
- Siddhasana** – accomplished pose; classical cross-legged meditation posture.
- Siddhi** – perfection; enhanced pranic and psychic capacity; paranormal or supernormal accomplishment; control of mind and prana; eight supernatural powers obtained by yogis as a result of long practice.
- Sirshasana** – headstand pose.
- Skanda Purana** – one of eighteen ancient sacred texts believed to be composed by Rishi Veda Vyasa. Skanda is the god of war.
- Smriti** – vedic text transmitted by memory.
- Soham** – mantra used in ajapa japa, said to be the unconscious repetitive prayer produced by the breath itself.
- Spandana** – movement, vibration; cosmic vibration, primordial pulsation; dynamic aspect of Shiva.

Sruti – the Vedas (created through revelation which was heard); literally ‘what has been heard’.

Sthairyam – the third limb of Sage Gheranda’s saptanga yoga; steadiness.

Sthiti – established condition; natural state.

Sthoola dhyana – meditation on concrete material forms, prescribed by Rishi Gheranda in *Gheranda Samhita* as suitable for beginners.

Sthoola prana – one of the pancha pranas or vayus located between the diaphragm and the larynx; it flows upward and controls the heart and the lungs; also called prana vayu.

Sukhasana – easy pose; a cross-legged meditation asana.

Sukshma – subtle; relating to the world of the psyche.

Sukshma dhyana – subtle meditation; as prescribed in *Gheranda Samhita* this meditation (dhyana) is linked with awakened kundalini shakti and is a subtle type of meditation beyond sensory perceptions or the lower mind.

Sukshma prana – psychic prana; energy intimately connected to the mind.

Surya – sun; vital pranic energy governing the world of matter.

Surya namaskara – salutations to the sun; a dynamic series of twelve postures.

Surya shakti – solar force; vital pranic energy; pingala nadi.

Sushumna – central energy flow (nadi) in the spine which conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara chakra. It is the main energy flow related to transcendental awareness. It is ‘situated’ in the spinal cord of the human body, and opens when balance is achieved between ida and pingala nadis.

Sushupti – third dimension of consciousness; deep sleep or unconscious realm of mind; profound repose undisturbed by the senses.

Sutratman – the conscious energy which operates in the subtle universe or macrocosmos; literally thread-like Self, representing the electric, cosmic, powerhouse.

Swadhisthana chakra – literally, ‘one’s own abode’; second psychic/pranic centre located in the coccyx, associated with the sacral plexus and governing the urogenital system; the storehouse of subconscious impressions.

Swapna – second dimension of consciousness; subconscious realm of mind, state of dreaming, the mind is looking inwards, seeing the internal experience, not the external objects.

Swara – breathing cycle; flow of the breath in the nostrils.

Swastikasana – auspicious pose; a cross-legged meditation asana.

Swatmarama, Yogi – literally ‘one who revels within oneself’; the author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, a classical text book in hatha yoga.

Tadagi mudra – the barrelled abdomen technique; a postural mudra creating pressure throughout the trunk of the body, thus relieving tension stored in diaphragm and pelvic floor and stimulating manipura chakra.

Tadasana – palm tree pose; a standing asana in which the body is stretched upward.

Tamas – one of the three gunas or attributes of nature; inertia, stability; ignorance, darkness; unwillingness to change.

Tantra – most ancient universal science and culture which deals with the transition of human nature from the present level of evolution and understanding to a transcendental level of knowledge, experience and awareness; a particular path of sadhana including mantra, yantra and other esoteric practices.

Tantric – pertaining to tantra.

Tapasya – practice of austerity.

Tattwa – ‘that-ness’; true essential nature; an element, a primary substance; another name for mahabhoota.

Tejas – luminosity, aura, splendour; bright alertness; warmth, heat.

Tiryak tadasana – swaying palm tree pose; a side bending asana.

Trataka – one of the shatkarmas; a technique of gazing steadfastly upon an object such as a candle flame, black dot or yantra with unblinking eyes.

Tulsidas – the author of one of the versions of the famous epic called the *Ramacharitamanas*, which describes the life of Lord Rama. It is composed in poetic form and is chanted by devotees throughout India.

Turiya – fourth dimension of consciousness; superconsciousness; simultaneous awareness of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind which links and transcends them; a state of liberation.

Turiyatita – beyond the fourth dimension; beyond the fetters of nature.

Udana vayu – one of the five pancha pranas or vayus, it is located in the extremities of the body: arms, legs and head; it flows with a spiraling motion and rises up the throat entering the head; it controls the sensory and motor organs.

Uddhava – devotee of Lord Krishna; a childhood friend of Krishna who later learned bhakti from the gopis.

Uddiyana bandha – abdominal retraction lock; drawing in of the abdomen towards the backbone after exhaling.

Ujjayi pranayama – a subtle pranayama often used during meditation; the psychic breath.

Unmani – mindless; beyond the mind.

Unmani mudra – the attitude of mindlessness; gesture and psychic attitude in which the eyes are open, gazing outwards, but the awareness is fixed within; also known as bhairavi mudra.

Upanishads – the philosophical portion of the Vedas, traditionally one hundred and eight in number, containing intimate dialogues and discussions between guru and disciple on the nature of the Absolute and the path leading towards it; literally ‘to sit near and listen’ (to the spiritual teacher); regarded as the source of Vedanta, Yoga and Samkhya philosophies.

Upaya – approach, means, stratagem; means of success against an enemy; effort; there are four main upaya sadhanas in tantra; anavopaya, shaktopaya, shambhavopaya and anupaya. See Anavopaya. See Shaktopaya. See Shambhavopaya. See Anupaya.

Vaikhari – audible speech or sound; one of the stages of nada yoga; one of the ways of practising mantra japa; that sound which is produced by the striking or friction of two things.

Vairagya bhava – the state of non-attachment, detachment from the world and its cause.

Vajrasana – thunderbolt pose; a kneeling meditative posture.

Vajroli mudra – contraction and release of the male urinary passage to stimulate swadhisthana chakra and promote brahmacharya; controlling the emissions during sexual intercourse according to hatha yoga texts.

Vama marga tantra – the left hand ritual of the tantras.

Varna – group of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet; language.

Vasana – subtle impressions which are the seeds of desires.

Vashitva siddhi – the power of control over all objects. See Siddhi. See Ashta siddhi.

Vasishtha, Sage – a celebrated rishi and seer of the Vedas; author of many vedic hymns and owner of the ‘cow of plenty’. His teachings are recorded in *Yoga Vasishtha*, one of the greatest expositions of jnana yoga.

Vata – wind, gas; one of the three humours (doshas) described in ayurveda. See Dosha.

Vayu – wind, air; life breath or vital air; another name for prana.

Vayu tattwa – air element, air principle.

Vayviye dharana – concentration on the air element; one of the five concentration practices described by Sage Gheranda under the category of mudra.

Vedanta – one of the six principle systems of Indian philosophy; literally ‘the last part of the Vedas’; the school of Hindu thought based primarily on the Upanishads; the doctrine of non-dualism (Advaita).

Vedas –ancient texts revealed to the sages and saints of India, explaining and regulating every aspect of life from Supreme reality to worldly affairs; four in number: Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva, which are further divided into the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads; the oldest books in the library of mankind, parts of them revealed to sages and seers before 5000 BC.

Veerasana – hero's pose, a contemplative asana.

Veerya – semen; strength; courage; energy.

Vibhu – glorious; gracious; interconnected; expansive.

Vidya – knowledge or science, particularly knowledge of spiritual truth and non-mundane reality.

Vijnanamaya kosha – astral or psychic (higher mental) sheath or body; one of the sheaths of the soul, consisting of the principle of intellect or buddhi, the subtler level of our own existence with its vision, intuition, wisdom and power of understanding; the covering of the self which is made of knowledge.

Vikalpa – fancy, unfounded belief, imagination; oscillation of the mind; one of the five modifications of mind listed in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. See Vritti.

Vipareeta karani asana – inverted pose; also known as the half-shoulder stand pose.

Vipareeta karani mudra – inverted psychic attitude; a postural mudra performed while in vipareeta karani asana.

Viparyaya –reverse; mistake; distraction of mind; wrong cognition.

Virakti – disinterest; indifference.

Vishnu – vedic deity; the second deity of the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), entrusted with the preservation of the universe, a duty which obliges him to appear in several incarnations; Supreme Consciousness.

Vishnu granthi – psychic block or knot particularly related to manipura, anahata and vishuddhi chakras, symbolizing the bondage of personal and emotional attachment. See Granthi.

Vishuddhi Chakra – literally ‘centre of purification’, the psychic/pranic centre located at the level of the throat pit or the thyroid gland; it is the psychic centre particularly connected with purification and communication.

Viveka buddhi – discriminative intellect.

Vritti – a modification arising in the mind related to a thought pattern; a particular state or condition.

Vyana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus; the reserve of pranic energy pervading the entire body.

Vyoma chakra – space chakra; another name for vishuddhi chakra. See Vishuddhi chakra.

Yantra – a geometric symbol of cosmic power designed to unleash the hidden potential energy and consciousness; used in meditation and concentration practices.

Yoga – union; the root is yuj, meaning ‘to join’, ‘to yoke’; a system of practice leading to a state of union between the individual and universal awareness; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, power and spiritual wisdom as well as perfect health, a sound mind and a balanced personality; one of the six main systems of philosophy in India.

Yoga danda – used by yogis, it is a stick with a U-shaped end that is placed under the armpit, regulating the breath by its pressure; ‘danda’ means stick or symbol of authority or discipline, also giving the literal meaning, ‘power of yoga’.

Yoga nidra – psychic sleep; practice in which the body sleeps while the mind remains aware as its movements are guided and quietened by instructions, inducing deep relaxation of body, mind and emotions.

Yoga Shikha Upanishad – one of the Upanishads which are more specifically concerned with yoga. See Upanishads.

Yoga Sutras – ancient authoritative text on raja yoga by Sage Patanjali.

Yogamaya – the power of divine illusion; shakti, the primordial power, has two roles to play, to unite and to separate.

Yogavit – literally ‘knower of yoga’, which is equated to knowledge of Brahman in *Gheranda Samhita*; yoga specialist.

Yogi – an adept of yoga; follower of the yoga system of philosophy and practice.

Yoni mudra – attitude of the womb or source; a hand mudra; also another name for shanmuki mudra.

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Conversations on the Science of Yoga is an encyclopaedic series presenting the vast, timeless culture of yoga topic by topic through the voice of three generations of masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. The teachings are given in question and answer format with the inclusion of verses from the scriptures, connecting the modern experience with the classical tradition.

Hatha Yoga Book 2: Hatha Yoga and the Mind is an in-depth exploration of the influence of hatha yoga on the mind. This vital aspect of hatha yoga is often overlooked due to the physical nature of the practices. The purpose of hatha yoga, however, is to balance and awaken both the dynamic and the mental energies in the body. Included are: the mind as energy; effects on the brain and personality; mind management; hatha yoga in meditation and higher states of consciousness; and beyond the limitations of the mind, the experience of samadhi.

Through the wisdom of these masters, a complete understanding of hatha yoga and a vision for its application in the modern era is interpreted for yoga aspirants around the world.



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